

Whatever It Takes

*How Twelve Communities Are
Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth*

NANCY MARTIN AND SAMUEL HALPERIN



AMERICAN YOUTH POLICY FORUM

In Cooperation With

National Conference of State Legislatures ■ National League of Cities ■ National School Boards Association
National Association of Secondary School Principals ■ Council of the Great City Schools



AMERICAN YOUTH POLICY FORUM

Bridging Youth Policy, Practice, and Research

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The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF), a nonprofit, nonpartisan professional development organization based in Washington, DC, provides learning opportunities for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers working on youth and education issues at the national, state, and local levels. AYPF's goal is to enable participants to become more effective in the development, enactment, and implementation of sound policies affecting the nation's young people by providing information, insights, and networks to better understand the development of healthy and successful young people, productive workers, and participating citizens in a democratic society. AYPF does not lobby or advocate for positions on pending legislation. Rather, we believe that greater intellectual and experiential knowledge of youth issues will lead to sounder, more informed policymaking. We strive to generate a climate of constructive action by enhancing communication, understanding, and trust among youth policy professionals.

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A person wearing a light-colored raincoat with a "Columbia" logo is sitting on a wooden bench outdoors, painting a large white canvas. They are holding a paintbrush and looking down at their work. A bucket of "OLD HOME" paint and a palette are on the ground next to them. In the background, another person is partially visible, and there are trees and a wooden fence. The entire image has a blue tint.

Dedication

Whatever It Takes is dedicated to the everyday heroes who daily do the heavy lifting of reconnecting our out-of-school youth to society's mainstream. As they help tens of thousands of out-of-school youth find success in further education, employment, and civic life, these highly creative and dedicated educators and community leaders are refashioning the traditional meaning of high school. They deserve greater recognition and society's wholehearted support.

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Council of the Great City Schools

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National Conference of State Legislatures

National League of Cities

National School Boards Association

Every Nine Seconds in America a Student Becomes a Dropout

*The Dropout Problem in Numbers**

Millions of students leave school before high school graduation.

- In School Year 2002-2003, US public schools awarded 2.7 million diplomas and the National Center for Education Statistics calculated the graduation rate to be 73.9%. Graduation rates varied greatly by state, from 87% in New Jersey to under 60% in the District of Columbia and South Carolina. Thirty-nine states increased their graduation rates from 2001 to 2003 while most southern states, plus Alaska, the District of Columbia, and New York, experienced declines.¹ Other authoritative research found the 2002 graduation rate to be 71%, little changed from 1991's 72%.²
- In 2004, there were 27,819,000 18-24-year-olds in the United States. Of these, 21,542,000 (78%) had either graduated from high school, earned a GED, completed some college, or earned an associate's or bachelor's degree. The balance, 6,277,000 (22%), had not yet completed high school.³ Some scholars exclude GED holders, resulting in a much higher noncompletion figure. Similarly, if researchers count the adult population over age 24, the high school noncompletion rate would be higher still.⁴
- An estimated 3.8 million youth ages 18-24 are neither employed nor in school—15% of all young adults. From 2000 to 2004, the ranks of these disconnected young adults grew by 700,000.⁵
- From 1990 to 2000, high school completion rates declined in all but seven states and the rate of students dropping out between 9th and 10th grades increased.⁶

Members of some demographic groups are at much greater risk of dropping out of school.

- Nationally, only about two-thirds of all students who enter 9th grade graduate with regular high school diplomas four years later. For minority males, these figures are far lower.⁷ In 2001, on average, 72% of female students, but only 64% of male students graduated. African American students had a graduation rate of 50%, the lowest of racial and ethnic groups identified; the other student groups graduated at the following rates: American Indian, 51%; Latino, 53%; White, 75%; and Asian and Pacific Islander, 77%. But there were enormous disparities among state graduation levels, and even larger disparities by ethnicity and gender within the same states.⁸
- In SY 2000-2001, high school students from low-income families (the lowest 20%) dropped out of school at six times the rate of their peers from higher-income families.⁹
- In SY 2000-2001, only 47.6% of persons with disabilities ages 14 and older graduated with standard diplomas while 41.1% dropped out.¹⁰

When young people drop out of school, they—and American society at large—face multiple negative consequences.

- Of those who fail to graduate with their peers, one-quarter eventually earn a diploma, one-quarter earn the GED, and about one-half do not earn a high school credential.¹¹

* There is no generally-accepted definition of a dropout. Some use school enrollment figures; others rely on US Census population surveys. Some include GED recipients; others do not. Some keep records of transfer students; many do not.

- Three-quarters of state prison inmates are dropouts, as are 59% of federal inmates.¹² In fact, dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be incarcerated in their lifetime.¹³ African American men are disproportionately incarcerated. Of all African American male dropouts in their early 30s, 52% have been imprisoned.¹⁴ 90% of the 11,000 youth in adult detention facilities have no more than a 9th grade education.¹⁵
- The earning power of dropouts has been in almost continuous decline over the past three decades. In 1971, male dropouts earned \$35,087 (in 2002 dollars), but this fell 35% to \$23,903 in 2002. Earnings for female dropouts fell from \$19,888 to \$17,114.¹⁶ The mean earnings of Latino young adults who finish high school are 43% higher than those who dropout.¹⁷
- The earnings gap widens with years of schooling and formal training. In 2003, annual earnings of male dropouts fell to \$21,447. High school graduates earned an average of \$32,266; those with associate's degrees earned \$43,462; bachelor's degree holders earned \$63,084—about triple that of dropouts.¹⁸
- In 2001, only 55% of young adult dropouts were employed, compared with 74% of high school graduates and 87% of four-year college graduates.¹⁹
- Between 1997 and 2001, more than one-quarter of all dropouts were unemployed for one year or longer, compared with 11% of those with a high school diploma or GED.²⁰ In 2003, more than one-half of African American young adult male dropouts in Chicago were unemployed.²¹
- The US death rate for persons with fewer than 12 years of education is 2.5 times higher than for those with 13 or more years of education.²²
- Dropouts are substantially more likely to rely on public assistance than those with a high school diploma.²³ The estimated lifetime revenue loss for male dropouts ages 25-34 is \$944 billion. The cost to the public of their crime and welfare benefits is estimated to total \$24 billion annually.²⁴
- Dropouts contribute to state and federal tax coffers at only about one-half the rate of high school graduates; over a working lifetime about \$60,000 less, or \$50 billion annually for the 23 million high school non-completers, ages 18-67.²⁵
- The US would save \$41.8 billion in health care costs if the 600,000 young people who dropped out in 2004 were to complete one additional year of education. If only one-third of high school dropouts were to earn a high school diploma, federal savings in reduced costs for food stamps, housing assistance, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families would amount to \$10.8 billion annually.²⁶
- Increasing the high school completion rate by 1% for all men ages 20-60 would save the United States \$1.4 billion annually in reduced costs associated with crime.²⁷
- Federal investments in second-chance education and training programs fell from \$15 billion in the late 1970s to \$3 billion (inflation-adjusted) today.²⁸
- Dropouts “cost our nation more than \$260 billion dollars...That’s in lost wages, lost taxes, and lost productivity over their lifetimes. In federal dollars, that will buy you ten years of research at the National Institutes of Health.”²⁹
- The statistic bears repeating: every nine seconds in America a student becomes a dropout.³⁰

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Introduction

Conventional wisdom holds that America's enormous school dropout problem is a scourge on the nation's moral, social, and economic life, and a blight on our common national future. That conventional wisdom is right. As a reminder of the shameful facts, the preceding pages summarize the magnitude of the dropout problem, its disproportionate impact on particular communities, and its corrosive consequences for all Americans, not merely the dropouts. The problem must no longer be ignored or treated lightly.

Whatever It Takes: How Twelve Communities Are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth is not, however, a mournful jeremiad repeating the sad facts. Nor does it recycle what the popular media trumpet about the supposed failure of our public schools as symbolized, for example, by the shocking enormity of the dropout problem. Rather, this report explores two questions:

■

What can be done to recover and reconnect our young people to opportunities for building useful lives in work, family, and citizenship?

■

Who is doing what, and where, to reengage out-of-school youth while working to strengthen the communities in which they live?

Focusing on the positive, the American Youth Policy Forum's research, interviews, and site visits demonstrate that there are thousands of committed educators, social entrepreneurs, and community leaders across the country who are doing whatever it takes to reconnect out-of-school youth to the social and economic mainstream. Their efforts generally occur without public fanfare or adequate recognition.

Any sensible school reform effort must embrace both dropout prevention and recovery. **Whatever It Takes** does not focus on prevention but recognizes its obvious importance. With roughly one-third of our young people dropping out of school—one-half among young people of color—recovery and recon-

nection must become a top priority of public school districts. Through our research, we have come to believe strongly that high school reform would be greatly enhanced by the kinds of leadership and innovation displayed daily by the people whose work is chronicled in these pages. Many are extraordinary individuals who persistently perform the heavy lifting necessary to ensure that out-of-school youth are properly reconnected to society's mainstream.

Observations and Reflections

The settings and modes of dropout recovery are many and varied. They encompass traditional public schools, specially-created recovery-focused schools, alternative learning centers, community-based non-profit schools and programs, for-profit schools, federally-, state-, and county-funded efforts, community colleges, the adult education system, and other social services. It is heartening that such diverse people, resources, and institutions recognize the urgency of steering their communities' out-of-school youth back into education and/or employment training so that they can build lives of genuine high promise and responsibility. Unfortunately, in many communities the work of recovery and reconnection has yet to begin in earnest.

Our descriptions and impressions of this sample of a dozen communities with notable reclamation endeavors are stories of success rather than products of rigorous scientific analysis. While each community can point to measurable evidence of success, few of these measures would meet the gold standard of today's evidence-based research. If fully reliable, comprehensive evaluations of K-12 schooling are few, those relating to out-of-school youth are even rarer. "Stories" better captures the essence of what we have seen and wish to share with others: young lives changing from poverty and despair to possibility and promise; institutions effectively reshaping themselves to meet the learning needs of young people who seldom have been the object of society's attention and compassion.

Having studied numerous dropout recovery efforts in-depth, we offer these observations to those concerned with high school reform and reconnecting out-of-school youth to opportunities for education and employment:

The large majority of out-of-school youth have been impeded not only by poor prior schooling, but also by social, economic, and psychological barriers to effective learning. To become successful adults they need multiple supports. Improved schooling alone will not “fix” these young people or solve their manifold problems, not the least of which are often inherently personal traumas. At a minimum, these typically low-income and often troubled students must have ready access to support services in such vital areas as health, nutrition, teen parenting, childcare, transportation, substance abuse treatment, mental health, and instruction in English as a second language. Without these supports, and in some cases even more specialized professional resources, prospects for genuine academic achievement and successful career-focused training can dissolve into pipe dreams.

Beyond question, youth must acquire literacy, numeracy, and communication skills to be adequately prepared for adult life. Students in the vast majority of the schools and programs described in this report are being prepared to meet or exceed state and district academic standards. As a practical matter, managers of recovery and reconnection programs realize that their claims on public monies (e.g., through charter school funding, Workforce Investment Act funds, or funds-follow-the-student arrangements) depend heavily on their students’ improved academic performance. While these schools and programs work to increase student performance on standardized tests, they frequently supplement such testing with portfolio assessment, exhibition of student work, and other proven ways of evaluating what young people know and are able to do. They emphasize less easily measured qualities such as artistic talent, leadership ability, and social and environmental responsibility. Most also place a high premium on students avoiding negative and harmful behaviors.

Effective dropout reconnection efforts are comprehensive, youth-centered, flexible, intentional, pragmatic, and inclusive of extensive post-graduation follow-up. Some efforts emphasize preparing young people for employment after first building a foundation in literacy and numeracy. Others stress education writ large and, from the outset, urge their participants

to aim for success in postsecondary education. Still others focus on personal development and preparation for responsible adulthood in all its familial and civic dimensions. Likewise, long-established national program models (discussed in Part Two of this report) that merit support are only replicable with sensitive adaptations to local culture, history, and power structures. What they share is an unwavering commitment to putting students at the center. As we often heard from students, these schools and programs often provide the first occasion for them to feel that anyone cares about their success, the first chance for them to feel valued.

Young people want to learn and succeed. Skeptics who doubt that dropouts want to learn and to achieve mainstream employment and respectability should visit the schools and programs described in this report. Most have long waiting lists well beyond their ability to serve. Conversations with the young participants themselves reveal motivated, spirited individuals who realize they have wasted much of their young lives and are eager to change, to learn and grow, to accept adult help, and to make the hard personal effort required to earn a respectable place in their communities. They readily acknowledge that their old lives were not working for them but now revel in their new friends, expanded opportunities, and heightened sense of personal responsibility and optimism.

Service to others and to the community is a key element of many dropout recovery efforts. Successful dropout reconnection depends on more than just success in academic education and employment training, augmented by a broad range of sensitively targeted and accessible support services. Preparing troubled young people for roles as responsible, engaged citizens is an integral, nearly universal characteristic of the successful recovery efforts we studied. We were pleasantly surprised to learn that community service and service-learning are built into many more recovery schools and programs than we had anticipated.

Committed adults, steadfast in their support of young people’s success, are the key element of dropout recovery. Of the many laudable features of impressive recovery schools and programs—program design, institutional structure, and educational methodology, to mention a few—the quality that most distinguishes exemplary efforts is the exceptional caliber of the people who serve in them. Of the key players on a large roster, several groups repeatedly stand out: the

policymakers, many of them elected office-holders, who champion, authorize, and fund recovery efforts; the teachers, mentors, counselors, coaches, and others who commit themselves with passion to direct involvement in the lives of the young people and who make themselves available to them around the clock; and the community leaders, employers, and supportive family members and friends, who help guide out-of-school youth to self-respect and self-sufficiency. Our experience with over 40 programs persuaded us that adults involved in recovery efforts must honestly believe that they can help young people to overcome the ego-smashing effects of past failure and trauma. Repeatedly, in the face of seemingly overwhelming contrary forces, they simply refuse to give up on young people. They search relentlessly for more effective ways to reach and teach even the least promising and most recalcitrant. Many keep close tabs on their students, often well past graduation. Such concern and persistence can help trump many of life's adversities while ennobling both the teacher and the learner.

Language is an important consideration in the world of dropout recovery. Many respected leaders in that world conspicuously shun such descriptors as “dropouts,” “at-risk youth,” “kids,” “alternative education,” “nontraditional school” and “second-chance program.” Rather, they view their work as redefining what effective education and youth development really can and should be. They see themselves as authentic reformers, attuned above all to the interests of their students or trainees, people who are not labeled and pigeon-holed as “at-risk” or “errant” youth but, instead, as potentially motivated young adults and students of promise. Program leaders acknowledge the traumatic personal histories that many of these young people have experienced, but they refuse to accept those histories as excuses for continued self-destructive and antisocial behavior. They try, with much success, to treat the youth in their schools and programs as resources whose opinions on the shaping and management of their education can be valuable assets. Listening carefully to young voices is a critical element in most successful recovery and reconnection efforts. The language of staff in recovery schools and programs is revealing: almost invariably they internalize and vocalize their responsibility not to “their” students but to “our” students.

School districts must take responsibility for all of

their young people and show leadership in reaching out to disconnected youth. Contrary to the widely-held attitude that public schools have little or no interest in helping young people get back on track, some urban school districts, often with powerful support from politicians and business interests, are providing convincing evidence to the contrary. While some school systems are establishing close ties to external, nonprofit, community-based entities to provide their students with a broader portfolio of educational options, others are doing the same entirely within the public school system. As a practical matter, this often means extending their services to adults well beyond the age of compulsory attendance. School districts must be willing to insist that an irrevocable responsibility of public schools is to educate, and educate well, all youth and young adults.

Many practices prevalent in successful “alternative” and “second-chance” education programs should be adopted by the “first-chance” system to improve student retention and academic success. When we ask young people who are successfully completing a second-chance recovery program why this program has worked whereas their former high school failed them, they tell us that they no longer feel like a number, that they are now part of a “family” that looks out for them and is genuinely dedicated to their success. They describe satisfying relationships with caring teachers and counselors who treat them like responsible adults and expect the best of them. Most are in programs with low student-to-staff ratios, which permit the development of close-knit personal support systems. Students also emphasize their preference for hands-on, contextualized learning, or experiential education—internships, apprenticeships, field work—that demonstrate the relevance of classroom learning to their present lives and future careers. They appreciate demanding teachers, clear rules, and the flexibility to recover lost credits or accelerate their learning—elements often lacking in their previous schools. What these young people have to tell us must be used to inform any discussion of high school reform.¹

While charter schools evoke passionate, often negative, reactions in many educational circles, their flexibility and adaptability make them increasingly popular among nonprofit, community-based organizations dedicated to reconnecting out-of-school youth to the mainstream. Many secondary schools serving

out-of-school youth have obtained charters, not only to gain access to state education funding, but, more fundamentally, because they believe that public education dollars should serve all young people, including those who have not been successful in traditional schools. They believe that many traditional schools have failed these youth and that the state has a moral obligation to fulfill its promise to educate all of the nation's young people. Public funding, such as payments based on average daily attendance, is seldom enough to cover the full costs of an effective recovery effort. But combining it imaginatively with other public and foundation grants, as entrepreneurial charter school leaders are learning to do, can result in academic and employment gains that compare favorably with those achieved by traditional public schools.

Dropout recovery efforts are funded largely by state and local public and private revenues. Over the past decade, intrepid practitioners and entrepreneurs have also learned how to access monies from other funding streams (e.g., juvenile justice and social welfare), as well as from the burgeoning world of state and local charter school agencies.

Support from the Federal Government, which otherwise underwrites a large array of education and job training programs, plays a relatively minor role in the genuinely worthwhile endeavor of dropout recovery. Funds from neither the US Department of Education's Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act nor the Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, both logical potential sources of help for dropout recovery, are cited by program directors as significant sources of support.² In contrast, grants from the now-ended Youth Opportunity Program and Workforce Investment Act (US Department of Labor), the YouthBuild program (US Department of Housing and Urban Development), and AmeriCorps (Corporation for National and Community Service) have been more closely attuned to the missions of these programs, even though they, too, fall far short. It has become ever-clearer that governments at all levels do not yet regard dropout recovery (as distinct from prevention) as a morally or economically compelling priority worthy of major investment of public monies. We believe it most surely is.

The varied programs and policies described in this report are possible for any community to implement. As a number of program directors have noted, effective dropout reconnection is not rocket science.

It lends itself neither to silver bullets nor to simple, universal solutions. Dropout recovery is hard, often frustrating, work, more perspiration than inspiration. At its core, it is a matter of moral and political will, an insistent commitment to do whatever it takes to get the job done--and done right.

Our goal in presenting this report to decision makers and practitioners alike is to highlight some of the ways that remarkably dedicated people are addressing an underrated American dilemma that, to an alarming degree, threatens social stability, weakens our economy, and diminishes the lives of millions of our fellow Americans—and our own. Policymakers of good will have often rallied around causes that they perceive matter; reconnecting our nation's dropouts to the mainstream should be such a cause.

The nation has more than enough models and know-how to be able to reclaim America's dropouts.

Although more innovative and efficient approaches will surely emerge over time, perfection will probably always elude this greatly underappreciated field. And that, put bluntly, will be because the toughest problems that the world of recovery and reconnection faces are not basically ones of school reform or program structure. To a large degree, these problems revolve around the central issue of moral and political will, both of which are often in short supply. Without a widely-held popular conviction that dropouts represent an unacceptable loss of life and opportunity both for young people and the nation, real progress will be difficult to achieve.

Nancy Martin
Washington, DC

Samuel Halperin
March 2006

¹ We distinguish between the types of nontraditional schools profiled in this study from the so-called "alternative schools" used by many districts as disciplinary dumping grounds. While the former effectively reconnect out-of-school youth to education, the latter may actually serve to further disconnect youth from schooling.

² A large but generally unacknowledged source of effective financial support is the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Part II of the Workforce Investment Act). Administered by the states under funding from the US Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education, the FY 2005 appropriation of \$578.7 million will serve almost three million adult learners, including well over one million in-school and out-of-school 16-24-year-olds.



Part I

Community Case Studies

PART I: COMMUNITY CASE STUDIES

Introduction: Dropout Recovery in Twelve Communities

This first, and major, section of *Whatever It Takes* describes dropout recovery activities in 12 US communities, from New Jersey and Pennsylvania to Oregon and California. To choose these sites, AYPF published a “Request for Leads,” asking leaders in the youth policy, research, and program fields, as well as key staff in each state department of education, to contribute recommendations of exemplary dropout reconnection efforts. Based on these responses, a list of more than 100 recommended schools, programs, and initiatives was generated, and these were screened for three criteria: comprehensiveness, award of a recognized credential, and primary focus on dropout recovery (as differentiated from prevention). Case study examples were selected to cover a range of programs and policies to reconnect out-of-school youth, with emphasis on innovation and success. To avoid duplicating the work of ongoing research, a number of other dropout recovery efforts were not profiled in this study.¹

After reading descriptive materials posted on the nominees’ websites and conducting telephone interviews with program directors, principals and community leaders, the authors (and American Youth Policy Forum and National Youth Employment Coalition colleagues, Betsy Brand, Rachel Hare, Jennifer Lerner, Sarah Pearson, and Kristen Henry) visited the sites during the six-month period ending in October 2005. What follows is the information gathered and our subjective reactions to what we experienced.

Our profiles of dropout reconnection efforts in a dozen cities are, therefore, only a sampling, illustrating various modes of reconnecting out-of-school youth to education, employment, and civic participation; this is not a scientifically rigorous survey. The 12 profiles illustrate what is actually happening today to reengage disconnected youth. We hope they will serve as a practical resource for those leaders—whether at the school, program, district, city, county, or state level—who are in a position to make additional commitments to reconnect their communities’ dropouts to the economic, educational, and social

mainstream.

The schools, programs, policies, and practices profiled here deserve far greater public attention and support than they are receiving. In the course of our site visits, we came to admire dozens of remarkable educators, youth workers, program managers and staff, and their supporters, who work both within and outside of local government. Equally impressive were the many young people who had dropped out before completing high school, but who ultimately decided to seek a high school diploma, GED, or other organized career preparation program. These youth were generally working against great odds and juggling responsibilities that often obstructed their paths to a productive future. Often, we wondered if we ourselves could have overcome the roadblocks of inadequate schools, homelessness, frequent family moves, poverty, parenting at a young age, fear of abuse and violence, among others, that impede the way of so many young people today.

Eight of the communities in *Whatever It Takes* have programs housed within their public school systems. Others have schools and programs created and operated by entrepreneurial, public-spirited citizens working through community-based organizations. State charter school legislation and its accompanying public funding are especially important to this group of schools pursuing dropout recovery.

In the Introduction to this report, we assert that reconnecting dropouts is not rocket science. Rather, it is more an exercise in imagining what might be, of having the skills, the will, and the stamina to shape reality in more creative and positive directions. There is no one perfect model or blueprint for successful dropout recovery. On reflection, though, we think readers will find that most of the following characteristics of effective dropout recovery efforts recur throughout the community reports:

Open-Entry/Open-Exit—Most programs are open-entry/open-exit, with students proceeding through curricular modules at their own pace. Graduation occurs once the student has successfully completed state and district requirements. Some

programs use teacher-developed curricula keyed to state standards. Extensive use of computer-assisted technology (frequently PLATO or EXTRA Learning System software) and the Internet are common. Such flexibility is crucial to schools and programs serving youth with vastly different skill levels and needs.

Flexible Scheduling and Year-round Learning—Flexible scheduling and year-round learning are common features of successful dropout recovery schools and programs. One program has five eight-week sessions interspersed with two-week breaks. Another uses trimesters with an extended school-supervised internship in the field. Two-hundred-day school years and longer school days are common. Many programs include a half-day of hands-on field work, such as skill-building through home construction, computer repair, or conservation work. Others are half-day academic programs, with a choice of early, midday, or evening classes. Such built-in flexibility accommodates students who have family and work responsibilities.

Teachers As Coaches, Facilitators, and Crew Leaders—Reliance on self-paced learning in small, personalized learning communities often changes teacher roles to those of facilitators, coaches, and crew leaders. Because the emphasis is on close, informal relationships, many students call staff by their first names, and symbols of authority such as teacher desks and privileges available only to staff are often absent. The message sent to program participants is: “You are an adult. We respect you. We are here to help you achieve your goals.”

Real-world, Career-Oriented Curricula—Curricula in successful community-based schools and programs tend to be real-world and career-oriented, with an eye toward local employer needs, such as entry-level positions in hospitals and the construction trades. Teachers and program managers recognize that success in employment, not simply the acquisition of paper credentials, is the near-term objective of their students and trainees. In the school programs and initiatives profiled, extensive investments are made in preparing students for postsecondary education, post-graduation employment, and further advancement in the world of work.

Opportunities for Employment—Recognizing that many students need income to support themselves and their families, many schools and programs arrange employment opportunities in summer and afterschool hours for their students or offer modest

stipends for work performed while in training. Work opportunities related to their educational programs provide students much-needed income while stressing specific career goals. Many program directors wish that they could also provide stipend incentives for hours spent in academic study.

Clear Codes of Conduct with Consistent Enforcement—Although dropout recovery programs serve a high proportion of young people who have been involved in juvenile justice systems or expelled from previous schools for disciplinary reasons, few programs experience serious violations or expulsions, and even fewer believe that security personnel or metal detectors are needed. Staff and students enforce honor codes and contracts (e.g., no violence, no bullying, no drugs) and strict standards of attendance and effort. Instead of strong reliance on punitive discipline or security measures to make their schools and programs safe, dropout recovery administrators use the positive rewards of learning, achievement, and peer recognition to great success.

Extensive Support Services—Virtually all schools and programs engaged in dropout recovery recognize that students require extensive support services, notably those related to health and physical well-being, to overcome barriers to learning. Pregnant and parenting students, in particular, need child care and instruction in child development if they are to concentrate on their academic programs. Many program leaders report a high incidence of homelessness among their students, a problem few programs are able to address effectively. Nor are all schools and programs able to afford professional counselors, case managers, and social workers, but most identify this need as a top priority. Above all, young people need—and want—caring adults who counsel, mentor, and guide them.

A Portfolio of Options for a Varied Group—Young people who drop out of school are a heterogeneous group that requires a wide range of reconnection options. Students leave school for a variety of reasons and have many different barriers to success upon reentry. Strong dropout recovery efforts are varied and offer students a wide range of program options. Larger schools and programs are able to present a number of programs so that students may choose the program that best meets their needs. When this type of “portfolio of options” is offered by a school district, such as in Portland, Oregon, and Jefferson County, Kentucky, the opportunities

for students to reconnect and succeed are greatly enhanced.

The sum total of what is reported in these pages is a hopeful, even inspiring, perspective on what is being done to return thousands of American young people to productive participation in the nation's economy and society. We urge our readers to make similar contributions to the public good by studying this report, contacting the caring women and men who daily create, manage, and refine their mission of reclaiming out-of-school youth, and then proceeding to explore and shape authentic ways to achieve equally laudable results in their own communities.

¹ See page 167 for additional resources on dropout reconnection.

CHAPTER I

Montgomery County (Dayton), Ohio

- *A county-led, targeted dropout recovery effort with political will in abundance*
- *Charter schools for the out-of-school youth population*

With a population of 161,696, Dayton is the main jurisdiction of Montgomery County in western Ohio, which, as in much of what has been termed the “rust belt,” has been attempting to cope with major losses of industrial jobs. Especially hard hit are the city’s less-educated young people, of whom Dayton has more than its fair share. According to the 2000 US Census, 5,514 of Dayton’s 18-24 year-olds (23%) had earned neither a high school diploma nor a GED, compared with 18,525 persons 25 and over (18%). In March 2005, the Ohio Graduation Tests, taken at the end of the 10th grade, became a requirement for high school graduation, and many educators across the state fear that this requirement could lead to an even larger out-of-school youth population.

In 1998, local leaders in government, business, and education, who were profoundly concerned about the economic and social ramifications of these disturbing realities, established the Montgomery County Out-of-School Youth Task Force, with much of its political leadership contributed by the County Administrator. One of its first moves was to establish an institutionalized and centralized city-wide system of dropout recovery for out-of-school youth, a wise but often overlooked action. With strong support from Sinclair Community College, Dayton is now home to the Sinclair Fast Forward Center, which was to become a uniquely efficient central clearinghouse to recover dropouts. Out-of-school youth need make only one telephone call to reach a staff person qualified to lead them to opportunities for second-chance education and skills training geared to the needs of a wide range of programs for the dropout population. Descriptions of three of these programs—**Improved Solutions for Urban Systems (ISUS)**, **Mound Street Academies**, and the **Life Skills Center**—follow.

A Community Responds: The Montgomery County Out-of-School Youth Initiative

The Montgomery County Out-of-School Youth Task Force’s main objective in 1998 was to recommend what the county could do to reclaim its dropouts and serve them most beneficially. At the time, the County was spending over two-thirds of its budget on criminal justice or human services, including social services and welfare benefits—disproportionately on school dropouts. The Dayton Business Committee, a long-established entity, estimated that 5,000 to 6,000 high school-aged Montgomery County youth—a conservative number, according to many local sources—were out of school. Tackling a much-needed community effort in a time of budgetary restraints was a tough job, but the key to using resources wisely lay in a targeted dropout recovery initiative.

County Administrator Deborah Feldman credits Frederick Smith, a Dayton business leader and community philanthropist, with having convinced her to attack the dropout issue shortly after she assumed the post in June 1997. Widely regarded as the “moral compass” of the community, Smith explained that, if only for economic reasons, the County simply had to address dropout recovery. “It became clear,” said Feldman, “that there was no one responsible for dropouts until they committed a crime or had a baby. We were doing little to keep people from coming into our [social welfare and criminal justice] systems; and if it was one criterion that was bringing them to our systems, it was lack of education.” With Smith’s

“No one was responsible for dropouts until they committed a crime or had a baby.”

—Deborah Feldman,
Montgomery County County Administrator

help, Feldman brought a dropout resolution to the County Commissioners who voted to create the Out-of-School Youth Task Force.

Feldman and Smith brought together members of the business, education, and criminal justice communities to serve on the Task Force, which defined out-of-school youth as “youth who are enrolled, but not regularly participating in an educational program, and all youth (with special emphasis on those under 18 years of age) who are in need of help to be reintegrated into an educational setting resulting in a high school diploma, GED, or economic self-sufficiency.”

The Task Force has remained focused on its goal of helping out-of-school youth obtain a high school diploma and/or a living wage job. An earlier Annie E. Casey Foundation report on Dayton had revealed that the community continued to fail out-of-school youth when they simply returned to the Dayton Public Schools with little or no follow-through. Reacting to this untenable reality, the Task Force set about designing and creating a new system that became, in effect, a “phantom school district for dropouts.” Once it had decided on a centralized, institutionalized way to deal with dropout recovery, it ran focus groups to determine where its services should be located. Sinclair Community College, no stranger to innovation and a key resource across the area, was the clear winner.

Sinclair Community College

Although 30% of its students come from outside the county, Sinclair Community College is a key community resource in Montgomery County. A County tax levy generates approximately \$21 million annually for the college. As evidence of the esteem it enjoys, a remarkable 72% of the County’s voters approved a targeted increase in their property taxes in 1998 to support Sinclair.

The Out-of-School Youth Task Force quickly realized that if the program was to succeed, Sinclair would have to be a driving force and major player, much more than just an administrative headquarters. Dayton’s citizens would be more willing to support the initiative if they knew that their community college would be an integral, functioning part of the process. For many out-of-school youth, attending Sinclair had always been the ultimate educational goal. In focus groups about Sinclair, they talked about access to it as a centerpiece of their own growth and development. It symbolized success to

dropouts, while local school superintendents did not see it as a competitor. Not surprisingly, it became the institutional home of the critically important central referral site for dropouts, which is now known as the Sinclair Fast Forward Center.

The Task Force, however, knew from the outset that it could not ask Sinclair to pay for the program. In addition, local foundations and business interests wanted to fund youth programming, not the administrative costs that would accompany it. Consequently, the President of the Montgomery County Commission requested that the college’s leadership support the project while pledging \$500,000 annually for five years beginning in 2001. Though faced with the issue of “mission enlargement or mission creep,” the college decided the issue was too important not to become involved. Montgomery County continues to provide \$500,000 per year to the Sinclair Fast Forward Center.

Almost predictably, the college’s key departments, as well as the Sinclair Community College Foundation, have weighed in, usually gratis, with many varieties of support, including helping to raise money, ensuring that funds are properly managed, and inviting the right people to support the Task Force’s work.

Sinclair’s involvement quickly attracted other parties to the initiative. Prevent Blindness Ohio, through the support of a local foundation, provides eye examinations and glasses to every student in need. The Dayton Development Coalition conducted a golf outing to raise money for the Fast Forward Center. Sinclair’s leadership was a strong influence in obtaining grants from the US Department of Labor and the State of Ohio. Private fundraising was also enhanced because the Sinclair Community College Foundation requested it. Businesses, hospitals, and others have contributed much-needed time, talent, and resources.

To raise money, the Task Force approached the state, only to be told that Ohio’s state education agency limited funding to programs for young people still in school. At that point, they decided to seek state charters to create publicly funded charter schools in order to tap into the public education funding structure. Although an existing program, Improved Solutions for Urban Systems (ISUS), had been serving former dropouts since 1992, the Task Force believed that the community needed a variety of options to serve the large and diverse out-of-

school population. In 2002, the Task Force obtained a charter to create the Mound Street Academies, even though its leaders have believed from the Academies' inception that this structure, which relies heavily on state charter school funding for schools leading to a high school diploma, leaves out students, notably older youth who have accumulated very few credits and for whom a diploma is an unlikely goal. Also, local school districts initially viewed charter schools as competitors draining funds from the public school system, as is the case in many jurisdictions. In addition to state charter funding, the County has been able to leverage Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and private donations for its out-of-school youth work.

The Dayton business community has played a major role in raising funds for the Out-of-School Youth Initiative. Led by Jerry Tatar, former President, Chairman, and Chief Executive Officer of Mead Corporation (an office supply company headquartered in Dayton), it has raised a hefty \$3.5 million, primarily for use in starting programs. Tatar argues the Out-of-School Youth Initiative has been one of Dayton's most successful community ventures.

Sinclair Fast Forward Center

Dayton's out-of-school youth who seek information on continuing their education can start by calling "512-FAST," the telephone number of the Sinclair Fast Forward Center. A centralized dropout referral service that assists youth in re-entering various forms of education and job training, the Fast Forward Center has proved itself to be an important first step for them to enter (or re-enter) the world of education and/or job training. Recognized by the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network with a Crystal Star Award for its excellence in dropout recovery, the Center does initial assessment and case management for those seeking to continue their education.

A department of Sinclair Community College, also called the Montgomery County Out-of-School Youth Initiative, refers out-of-school youth aged 15-21 to area alternative education options. It also distributes newsletters, annual reports, and evaluations of the Montgomery County Out-of-School Youth Initiative to local, state, and national organizations, and replies to questions on educational options for out-of-school youth. Although not a public relations operation, the Fast Forward Center does much to inform the community about the Out-of-School Youth

Sinclair Fast Forward Center Enrollment 2004-2005

Provider	Number of Students
Dayton Public Schools GED Program	838
East End Community Service Corporation	25
Life Skills Center	340
Improved Solutions for Urban Systems	381
Mound Street Academies	362
Miami Valley Career and Technical College–Youth Connections	161
New Choices Middle School	162
Webster Street Academy	63
Additional Schools	415
Dayton Urban League (Proficiency Intervention)	305
Total Students	3,052

Initiative.

Because the state created high school graduation requirements that took effect in 1993, many Dayton students find themselves with enough credits to graduate from high school, yet unable to pass the state test and receive their diplomas. The Sinclair Fast Forward Center refers students in this category, ages 22-30, to the Dayton Public Schools GED program.

The Fast Forward Center functions simply, yet effectively. Callers to 512-FAST are each scheduled for a one-hour assessment to which they must bring their Social Security Card, photo identification, birth certificate, and proof of residency. These are forwarded to the new schools which enables students to be placed quickly. After the initial assessment, counselors meet with students to help them choose an educational placement. A up-to-date database enables the Center to follow students and ensure they have been properly placed.

Rather than place the Fast Forward Center on the Sinclair Community College campus, the Task Force decided to locate it in the Dayton Job Mall, a former business warehouse which now houses many

county employment and social service agencies and organizations. The centerpiece of the Job Mall is the Montgomery County Job Center, the largest one-stop employment and training center in the United States. At the Job Mall, young people can be put directly in touch with a gamut of possibilities, such as Job Corps, Brighter Futures, and Lutheran Social Services, to name a few. As an added benefit, parents accompanying their children to the Center are often able to locate services for themselves and their families. Putting the Fast Forward Center in the Job Mall has been a successful move; Dayton area youth know where it is and feel comfortable going there.

In SY 2004-2005, the Fast Forward Center enrolled 3,052 students in various dropout recovery programs. Now four years old, the Center continues to grow. The majority of its enrollees who are not in the GED programs of the Dayton Public School system have gravitated to one of three dropout recovery programs, all of them charter schools: Improved Solutions for Urban Systems, Mound Street Academies, and the Life Skills Center (each described below).

In SY 2004-2005 school year, 310 of the 1,244 out-of-school youth referred by the Fast Forward Center to one of Dayton's high school dropout recovery programs received a diploma, while 89 earned a GED; this was a sizable increase from the 234 students who received high school diplomas and the 65 who earned a GED the previous school year and the 175 and 60 youth, respectively, in SY 2002-2003.

Funding

The Fast Forward Center's operational costs are funded by \$500,000 Montgomery County Grant for its internal expenses, which encompass student assessments and marketing and evaluations of programs. Remaining Fast Forward Center funds are passed straight to the direct service providers. These grants include: the Montgomery County Jobs and Family Services' TANF program, a 21st Century Learning Grant, and a state of Ohio grant. The 21st Century Learning Grant, received in 2004, provides \$1.2 million over five years from the federal 21st Century Community Learning Center to be used at Mound Street Academies for afterschool enrichment programs. The TANF funds, through a County agreement, are used by ISUS and New Choices Middle School.

Since the Center opened in 2002 its annual budget has increased by more than half, from

Sinclair Fast Forward Center Revenue Summary 2006

Montgomery County Grant	\$500,000: 14%
21st Century Grant	\$274,000: 8%
State of Ohio Grant	\$750,000: 22%
Montgomery County Jobs and Family Services—TANF	\$1,100,000: 32%
Gifts/Pledges/Earnings to Date	\$704,162: 20%
On Hand	\$150,624: 4%

\$2,040,351 to \$3,333,083 in Fiscal Year 2006. Because a large portion of its funding comes from Montgomery County, permanent funding is a special challenge in the all-too-familiar times of tight budgets.

Improved Solutions for Urban Systems

Established as a nonprofit organization charged with researching and developing innovative strategies for self-sufficiency, Improved Solutions for Urban Systems (ISUS) has been at the forefront of Dayton's dropout reconnection efforts since 1992. It began as a project to help dropouts and near-dropouts acquire construction skills while completing their high school diplomas or preparing for their GED tests. In 1999, the Ohio Board of Education accepted a proposal to charter the ISUS Trade and Technology Prep Community Charter School, the state's first charter school with an explicit mission of reconnecting out-of-school youth. Currently, ISUS operates three charter schools in Dayton with two more to be added in 2006.¹

A GED didn't do it, so ISUS added the high school diploma; but that didn't really do it either, so they added certification. "It encourages people to move up the ladder and provides a common-sense approach to doing so."

—Ann Higdon, ISUS President

Students at ISUS charter schools work toward a high school diploma while being trained in high-demand fields; their academic curriculum is thus closely aligned with hands-on training. In other words, the ISUS program is, as ISUS's dynamic President Ann Higdon has said, "high school plus." In an average of two years, ISUS students earn both a diploma and an industry-recognized credential in one of four career fields: construction, manufacturing, health care, or computer technology. "A GED didn't do it, so we convinced the state that these youth could pass the state exams and earn a high school diploma," explains Higdon; "but that didn't really do it either, so we added certification. It encourages people to move up the ladder and provides a common-sense approach to doing so."

Each ISUS charter school focuses on a different career track and hires qualified members of the related industry to train students, bolster the curriculum, and help former dropouts to get decent jobs for which they are clearly prepared. Students in the **Construction Technology Program** follow training modules created by the National Center for Construction Education and Research to obtain certification. Those in **Health Care**, a partnership with Kettering College of Medical Arts, work toward a credential of nurse's assistant or licensed practical nurse. Students in the **Manufacturing Technology** program are trained for the advanced manufacturing industry. Those in **Computer Technology** learn about software and how to repair hardware while working towards A+ certification. Whatever their fields may be, all ISUS students receive extensive on-the-job training from skilled professionals.

Because most students come to ISUS lagging academically, the curriculum is competency-based rather than Carnegie-unit based. Its schools thus operate on a longer school day and year, enabling students to move through the curriculum at an average of 2.2 grades per year. They are in school eight hours per day, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., 210 days per year. Most districts around Dayton operate on a six or six-and-one-half-hour day, 180 days per year. Approximately one-third of each student's time is spent on academic subjects, one-third on technical training, and one-third on hands-on field work. In any given quarter, students take courses in either civics and language arts or science and math while also attending technical training classes and working in real job environments. To receive a high school diploma, ISUS



*ISUS President Ann Higdon with a student construction crew.
(Photo courtesy of Dayton Business Journal)*

students must pass all five Ohio Graduation Tests, all core academic subjects, and a career readiness assessment, as well as maintain at least a 90% attendance rate during their final year. Diplomas from ISUS have the same value as those from any other high school in the area.

The school year is divided into quarters with students in the manufacturing and construction programs spending one quarter practicing skills such as building wall panels for affordable housing or constructing homes on site. Health care and computer students alternate on a half-day basis during their service quarter between working in the partner hospital and refurbishing donated computers for inner city children.

A personalized, family-like atmosphere characterizes ISUS, with an enviable teacher-to-student ratio of 1:15 and class sizes averaging between 12 and 16 students. Staff and students participate in "family meetings" twice daily to discuss issues and recognize achievements. Dedicated counselors are available to help participants with issues arising outside of the school walls. The schools are all designed to start with a small student enrollment and to grow to no more than 250 students per year. Currently, the construction school numbers 250 students, the technology/manufacturing school enrolls 80, and the health care school has 60. The waiting list for entrance to ISUS schools shows six applicants for each available slot. Ohio requires that ISUS fill open spaces by lottery.

In addition to employing certified teachers, ISUS hires experienced journeymen, craftsmen, and other professionals to teach students. Because funding under terms of the federal Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 requires educators to have vocational certification, ISUS underwrites coursework at Wright State University for its noncertified instructors to obtain vocational certification. It favors hiring staff from relevant industries and currently employs 14 such instructors. Thus, ISUS can hire instructors with industry experience to create a real-world learning experience and environment for students. Altogether, ISUS employs 31 teachers for its approximately 350 students.

The students in ISUS programs are all former dropouts or near-dropouts ages 16-22 of whom four out of five have been court-involved. Nearly two-thirds are African American and 35% of the students are White. Although two-thirds of the students are from Dayton, ISUS schools have open enrollment for the entire state of Ohio.

ISUS lays out clear, consistent, and tough rules for its students, including a zero-tolerance policy for fighting and locked doors once the school day starts. Students take the rules very seriously and speak of their role in not allowing their peers to fight. While the rules at ISUS are stringent, students who enter the program extol the benefits of being in a place where they are part of a community of mutual respect.

The ISUS Student

- Virtually 100% dropouts
- 97% erratic attendance/habitually truant (upon entry)
- 92% severely credit deficient; not meeting or exceeding state benchmarks or standards; behind age group in basic skills
- 81% adjudicated delinquents/youth offenders/court-involved
- 63% qualify for free or reduced lunch
- 57% severe discipline problems (upon entry)
- 20% youth with learning or physical disabilities
- 10% previously expelled
- 9% parents/pregnant
- 3% foster youth

"We are social entrepreneurs."

—Ann Higdon, ISUS President

Of ISUS President Ann Higdon says "we are social entrepreneurs," and she embodies this philosophy by combining a deep concern for disconnected youth, a big picture view of community development in Dayton, and keen business savvy. A visit to Dayton shows how ISUS students are transforming whole neighborhoods through a focused strategy to rebuild and turn around disadvantaged areas of the city. ISUS has plans to rebuild 60 houses in the Wolf Creek Neighborhood, designing and building about ten dwellings annually. With these new homes being sold to low- and moderate-income families, the neighborhood, once full of boarded up and dilapidated properties, is becoming an attractive area for families. Students are also rebuilding a former 200,000 square-foot plumbing supply warehouse to house the construction and manufacturing schools. To date, ISUS students have completed 37 houses and an eight-unit apartment building and have helped design and build an exact replica of the childhood house of aircraft pioneers Orville and Wilbur Wright. In 2003, Professional Builders' Magazine awarded ISUS the "Best in American Living Award" for the quality of its construction work. Added recognition has come from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development "Excellence Award" and the Dayton Business Journal's "Not For Profit Business of the Year Award."

ISUS Funding by Category

Average Daily Attendance (Charter School Funding)	44%
Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Funds	16%
Private Sources (foundations, corporations, and individuals)	20%
Other Government Funding	13%
NCLB Titles 1-6	5%
Special Education—IDEA	2%



Left: Students concentrating on their assignments. Right: ISUS students in the Kettering College program listen as their teacher demonstrates taking vitals from a patient in the emergency room. (Photos courtesy of ISUS)

Building on the success of its programs, ISUS is creating a campus of five small schools, each with its own faculty, each teaching a different trade, and each growing to no more than 250 students. If there are comparable achievements in the field of dropout recovery, they are few and far between.

The ISUS charter schools receive average daily attendance (ADA) funding through Ohio state agencies. (This funding is based on actual attendance, while traditional public schools receive funding based on a yearly count taken in October. ISUS submits daily student attendance, which averages an encouraging 84%.) Two-thirds of its funding comes from the Ohio Department of Education, whose principal resources for this work—ADA, Perkins, Special Education—IDEA, and NCLB Titles 1 through 6—originate in the US federal budget. The rest is from private and other government funding sources. These include YouthBuild, AmeriCorps, TANF funds for job training, and support from the Dayton Rotary Club. Higdon secured a personal loan of \$100,000 to start ISUS from National City Bank, whose then-President was a Rotarian. With the support of several Rotary leaders, ISUS received a \$175,000 contribution from the Rotary club in the third year of the program; it was the largest gift the Club had made since its inception in 1913.

Taking nothing for granted, ISUS focuses on developing new resources and has found them by defining the organization creatively and devising new ways to be useful to the community. One example is its new wall panel manufacturing facility, an asset

that helps make it a serious player in the competition for Dayton's and Montgomery County's funds for affordable housing. For students who may still be involved with the courts, ISUS strives to demonstrate that employability can contribute to prevention and intervention.

Collaborating with Kettering College of Medical Arts

ISUS has a new health careers track that attempts to expand the area's health care workforce. Students in the program earn a high school diploma and while attaining certification as a nurse's assistant or licensed practical nurse. For these they take ISUS courses taught by Kettering College instructors. The college is motivated by its 17% vacancy rate in positions at some of its affiliated hospitals and the need for graduates to stay in the Dayton area. It views ISUS graduates as high-performing and likely to remain in town after graduation. Winona Winkler Wendth, Director of College Advancement and Alumni Relations at Kettering College, said of the partnership with ISUS: "Kettering College has had a reputation of being rather insular. We've realized we can't survive and be limited. We want to thrive. We need the energy of students like those ISUS can provide. Dayton needs energy and it needs to stay here. Everything good that happens to ISUS is going to happen to us."

ISUS Student Perspectives

Travis, a 16-year-old ISUS student, reports he was “out-of-control” before entering the school. He was expelled twice and in and out of jail, committing his first felony at age 14. “Drugs dominated my life. I was a 15-year-old alcoholic.” Travis felt that if he went back to a traditional high school he would be 20 before he obtained his diploma and would probably end up back in prison; instead, he entered a treatment facility where a peer told him about ISUS. When he left the treatment center, he came to ISUS and immediately noticed how friendly everyone was. “You have to want success to make it here. But if you come, you’ll see that you’re not just another number. You’re an individual. It really helps build your confidence.”

Aisha dropped out of school at 16 from a large public high school after failing 9th grade three years in a row. “There were too many people at my old school and I hardly ever went. The teachers didn’t know me and I got into a lot of fights.” She was also put on probation for running away from home. When Aisha became pregnant, her probation officer told her she had to go back to school and she came to ISUS. “When I told people I was pregnant and in high school,” she said, “a lot of people were surprised, since most girls just drop out when they have a baby. At ISUS they help you find ways to come back and get your diploma.”

Twenty-year-old **Matthew** left school for four years before coming to ISUS. He failed 9th grade twice and hated being in school where he had no friends and had to deal with bullies. “The teachers at my old school were just there for the paycheck. At ISUS I’ve had an easier time making friends, and I feel like the teachers really care,” said Matthew, who is now studying for his A+ computer certification.

ISUS students are genuinely committed to their school. Some students even drive from other cities in Ohio to come to school each day. Students continually speak of their close relationships with teachers. Dedicated staff frequently come to work, unpaid, during school vacations to give their students a safe haven. According to one student, “we come here when we have nowhere to go.”

Mound Street Academies

Mound Street Academics opened in the fall of 2002 to provide more educational alternatives for Dayton’s out-of-school youth population. It consists of three career-based alternative schools for students ages 15-22 who have dropped out: the **Military Careers Academy**, the **Health Careers Academy**, and the **IT Careers Academy**. All three combine computer-based academic instruction with career exploration and work-based learning to help students earn a high school diploma and gain a career focus. Students spend half the day in academic instruction and half in career-based learning, in paid employment, or at a volunteer job. Students receive elective credit for work experience. They must be Ohio residents, with priority given to former Dayton Public Schools students.

Mound Street’s academic courses are competency-based and aligned to the Ohio Department of Education academic standards. Students take one or two courses at a time using coursework provided by web-based PLATO learning systems, and they maintain individual computer accounts accessible from any location with an Internet connection. They can take Sinclair Community College courses online, at the college, or on the Mound Street campus and receive both college and high school credit, a potentially strong incentive for credit-short dropouts. They complete the program at their own pace, usually within two years. The attractive bottom line is that graduates earn a high school diploma and often also complete college course work while at Mound Street.

The **Military Careers Academy** allows students to explore job opportunities in both the military and civilian work forces, especially in engineering, automotive, and industrial technologies careers. Through an arrangement with Sinclair Community College’s Division of Engineering and Industrial Technologies, students receive hands-on training while earning both high school and college credit for successful completion of college-level courses. Wright Patterson Air Force Base offers job-shadowing, mentoring, and tutoring opportunities for Military Careers Academy students.

The **Health Careers Academy** prepares students to enter health career fields through related employment, job-shadowing, internships, and volunteer work. Students may participate in programs at the Mound Street campus to become nurse’s aides and patient care assistants. Typifying the program’s range

Mound Street Academies 2004-05 Student Information

Students served	606
Graduates	106
Total hours of unpaid community service	15,280
Total Carnegie Credits earned	1,617.5

and flexibility, Health Careers students take courses at Sinclair Community College, receiving both college and high school credit for having successfully completed courses in Sinclair's Division of Allied Health Technologies. Career preparation in dietetics and culinary arts is yet another Health Careers option.

The **IT Careers Academy** links students to careers in the main pathways of information technology: information services and support, network systems, programming and software development, and interactive media. Teachers help place students in related employment, job-shadowing, internships, and volunteer positions, as in the other two Mound Street Academies. Some Sinclair courses can yield both high school and college credit.

Mound Street is located in a former office building, which helps to create a business-like atmosphere. Students are clearly at work in this "no nonsense, no distractions" atmosphere in which they sit in cubicles with their own computer, and are grouped into classes of 20 with one certified teacher. Students work on self-paced computer-based instruction for more than three hours daily under the guidance of licensed teachers who inevitably come to serve them as advocate, confidante, tester, skills instructor, employment counselor, mentor, and sometimes even surrogate parent. They often act as case managers by aiding students to become better-rounded, more responsible members of their communities. The three principals of the Academies believe their 18-teacher staff (six in each academy) possess a combination of relevant professional experience and caring attitudes, the key to reaching young people.

Typical Mound Street Success Stories

After three years in a public high school, Latoyia dropped out and stayed away for a full school year before enrolling in the Health Careers Academy. As a dropout, she had been in trouble with the law. Fortunately, she realized that she needed an education and that a high school diploma was of greater value than a GED. Latoyia regards Mound Street as her second chance, has an excellent attendance record, and is a diligent worker both at school and at home, where she does her academic work on her own computer.

Tammy enrolled at Mound Street Military Academy when it opened in September 2002 and in two years earned all 20 1/2 credits for high school graduation and passed three proficiency tests. Already the mother of one daughter when she enrolled, she gave birth to her second daughter a month after enrolling at Mound Street and to a son two years later. She plans to pursue nursing as a career after graduation and believes strongly that "if I can become successful, so can everyone else!"

Travis enrolled in the IT Academy with only three high school credits and quickly earned five more. He had had a rough time in the foster care system, which he had entered several years earlier. Since coming to Mound Street, Travis has compiled a strong attendance record, is the lead student in his class for the Mound Street Life and Job Skills Fair, and contributes to activities that improve the Academy. His foster mother said, "I believe we have ourselves a success story here."

Mound Street's association with Sinclair Community College is at the core of its work. Betsy Apolito, Principal of the Health Careers Academy said, "Sinclair shows them they can be successful at a higher level," and the students make much of their affiliation, particularly their courses there. They pay \$25 for each Sinclair course and sign an agreement stating that Mound Street will pay the remaining course tuition for students who earn a grade of "C" or better. This uniquely attractive option also stipulates that students are responsible for paying the tuition if they earn a lower grade. The agreement ensures that the Mound Street students studying at Sinclair are committed to attending and applying themselves in their classes.



Ohio State Superintendent of Instruction, Dr. Susan Tave Zelman, visits Mound Street. (Photo courtesy of the Fast Forward Center)

Beyond academic courses, Mound Street offers a variety of extracurricular activities. Working with a local artist, for example, Mound Street students have learned how to play and build their own steel drums on which they perform at graduation. In addition, teachers sponsor songwriting and film clubs for students.

In SY 2004-2005, the Mound Street Academies served 606 students and had 106 graduates, all of whom possess Career Passports, portfolios including a resume, cover letter, and samples of work, and that can be shown potential employers. In the same school year, 99 students took college-level courses at Sinclair Community College. By graduation, they had earned 1,617.5 Carnegie Credits and \$435,657.13 in paid employment and had performed 15,280 hours of unpaid community service. What makes the number even more impressive is that 85% to 90% of Mound Street Academies' students are economically disadvantaged, many hold part-time jobs, and 25% are single parents. Nearly three-fourths (73%) are African American and 22% are White.

Life Skills Center

Dayton offers yet another option for formerly out-of-school youth ages 16-22: a state-funded, for-profit charter school owned and operated by White Hat Management, an Akron-based educational management organization. Its centerpiece is the Life Skills

Mound Street Academies Class of 2004 Follow-Up

	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
All Academies		
Positive Placement	74	95%
	Average hourly wage: \$8.34	
No Placement	4	5%
Health Careers Academy		
Positive Placement	15	100%
	Average hourly wage: \$8.73	
IT Careers Academy		
Positive Placement	32	94%
	Average hourly wage: \$8.44	
No Placement	2	6%
Military Careers Academy		
Positive Placement	29	94%
	Average hourly wage: \$8.07	
No Placement	2	6%

*Positive Placement refers to students who are working full/part-time, attending school full/part-time, working and/or attending school, in the application process to attend school, or in the military. No Placement means that the student is neither working nor seeking a job or education.

Center, which opened its doors in January 2005. The Center's director, James Brown, formerly headed the Sinclair Fast Forward Center and was instrumental in bringing White Hat Management to Dayton.

The Life Skills Center operates three four-hour sessions per day using computer-based instruction that allow students to work at their own pace. In addition to the computer-based curriculum, Life Skills teachers work one-on-one with students. The sessions involve three hours of academic work and one hour of "life skills," in which students practice resume writing, prepare for higher education and learn other job-related skills. Life Skills students can earn a high school diploma by completing all state requirements. In addition to academic subject, Life Skills Center has a vocational component, which requires

students to complete 90 hours of community service in order to graduate. Students receive one credit for every 150 hours they work and can earn up to four credits for on-the-job experience. Each class has a student-to-teacher ratio of 11:1 and each student has a computer. There are no minimal skill-level requirements for students to begin studying at the Life Skills Center.

Life Skills Centers are fully-funded as charter schools through the State of Ohio Department of Education and are tuition-free. Like other Ohio charter schools, the Life Skills Center receives \$37 a day from the state for each student in attendance. Students pay a \$10 one-time activity fee for the cost of basic supplies and a student identification card.

The reputation of Life Skills is partly due to James Brown's qualifications and personal charisma. "I'm a ghetto kid," said Brown. "I understand them." Brown claims the success of the program is due in large part to the competitive atmosphere it has engendered. The school is entirely credit-oriented, with students having individual scoreboards to keep track of what they have accomplished and what is left to complete. They must earn 22 credits using either the PLATO or A+ software. The Life Skills motto is "no credit—no diploma."

The Center opened with 350 students and had graduated 13 students six months later in June 2005. White Hat Management operates Life Skills Centers throughout Ohio, Arizona, Colorado, and Michigan and has enabled 4,700 students to earn high school diplomas. Staff at Life Skills receive starting salaries comparable to those of teachers in Montgomery County and can earn cash bonuses based on their Center's performance. White Hat determines the bonus based on the Center's enrollment, attendance, and graduation rates. To date, the Dayton Life Skills Center has enrolled approximately 100 more students than originally projected and has opened a third computer lab to accommodate the growing enrollment.

Lessons from Dayton

Dayton's ambitious and resourceful approach to the gnawing but under publicized matter of dropout recovery may be replicable—but aspiring communities, institutions, and private interests elsewhere would be well-advised to draw from it only those elements that would be compatible with their own unique strengths and circumstances. Everything Dayton is

doing appears to be working very well, and many of the features of its efforts would presumably fit in anywhere. But undergirding the Dayton/Sinclair effort are several strengths other jurisdictions may not always share. Among these are dynamic, hands-on leadership, a strong political will to offer dropouts a shot at a better life, largely cooperative and generous business interests, and powerful institutional backing from a venturesome, thoroughly respected community college.

Statistics of achievement are extremely important in efforts such as dropout recovery; successful programs must present a formidable lineup of them in describing and promoting their work. What may ultimately distinguish Dayton/Sinclair's effort from the rest, however eye-catching their numbers may be, is the character and depth of its leadership, both on and behind the scene. Dayton benefits from a seldom-seen blend of cross-jurisdictional expertise, political skills, and will, unquestioning commitment across the board, and genuine empathy for a largely overlooked population of young Americans. Underlying these pluses is a program-wide insistence that dropout recovery can help make better communities.

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¹ In Ohio, charter schools are called “community schools,” but for purposes of continuity in this publication we use the term “charter.”

CHAPTER 2

Jefferson County (Louisville), Kentucky

- *An irrevocable public school mission:*
“No expulsions. A place that works for every child and youth”
- *Exceptional use of student data to ensure budgetary and academic accountability*

The 1975 merger of the schools of urban Louisville and suburban Jefferson County opened the door to innovative, once-unimaginable programs across a broad span of educational concerns. Thirty years later, the combined system’s continuing drive to bring its students into the economic mainstream is notable for its creativity, inclusiveness, and flexibility. With the public schools in charge—and the definition of student stretched to embrace adults and new immigrants, among others—virtually all the indicators of progress are positive.

Unlike some of its peers around the country, Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) has not created a network of ad hoc programs or programmatic band-aids that disappear once financial and/or political backing evaporates. Its efforts to reconnect potential and actual dropouts appear to be very much a permanent part of the JCPS culture. They present powerful evidence that large, urban public school systems can make a strongly positive difference in the lives of otherwise unpromising young people.

Strictly judged, Jefferson County does not warrant a place in this study dedicated to showcasing exemplary dropout recovery programs. Although Jefferson County Public Schools does have large, diverse, and noteworthy programs to engage and reconnect dropouts who wish to earn a regular high school diploma, its highest priority is to ensure that every young person has the kind of flexible and engaging educational program that keeps them in school until graduation. What is most striking about this community is a public school culture that for over a quarter of a century has never expelled a single student. Under at least four different school superintendents and a succession of elected school boards, JCPS has embraced the philosophy that it has an irrevocable responsibility to create an effective educational experience for each and every student.

What JCPS has created is a comprehensive system of noteworthy programs that embrace both

traditional and alternative public schools to meet the diverse needs, interests, and learning styles of different students. As Marty Bell, Deputy to the Superintendent put it: “The foremost factor accounting for JCPS’s success is adopting a philosophy and culture that it is our obligation and commitment to assure every child a quality education. We will not give up on any child. We believe that not every teacher can teach all children, but we do have teachers who can address different student needs. It is our job to get each child in the right program with the right teacher.”

In educational jargon, JCPS is a “managed choice system” with a public mission of graduating every child to high standards, “no matter what it takes.” Said Superintendent Stephen Daeschner: “Our goal cannot be accomplished with a one-size-fits-all instructional program... That is why JCPS offers more than 80 specialized instructional programs designed to stimulate and motivate students to succeed.” Daeschner, the dean of large city superintendents, serving since 1993, emphasizes the challenge this way:

We still have a lot of work left to do, because there are so many needy kids. It is our job to find people who wake up in the morning and go to bed thinking about how to help these kids. It comes down to people, and their vision, passion, will and skill. It’s about the system to put success in place. We tell school leaders if you don’t do it this way, it won’t work. We practice tough love because our systems have been tested and work well for most kids. We did replace a middle school principal recently. She cared about the students, but she had low expectations for them and wasn’t challenging them. We need people who believe that every child can succeed.

An outgrowth of struggles over racial desegregation, the merger in 1975 of the Louisville Public Schools, and those of the surrounding Jefferson County opened new opportunities for excellent

education for students of all races. Today, JCPS offers magnet schools, magnet programs, magnet career academies, specialized programs, open enrollment, free transportation, and whatever else seems advisable both to attain quality and prevent “White flight” and resegregation. Descriptions of several of the County’s options follows.

The Louisville Education and Employment Partnership

Established in 1987, The Louisville Education and Employment Partnership (LEEP) is a collaborative effort of the JCPS, Louisville City Government, Jefferson County Government—now merged with Louisville Metro Government—Greater Louisville, Inc., Metro United Way, and Kentuckiana Works. LEEP grew out of the realization by Louisville’s leaders, including the mayor and city council, that education is the key to economic development. The fact that the Louisville area had a below national average percentage of high school graduates spurred LEEP to undertake its first major education activity.

The Partnership set its mission as assisting those students identified as potential dropouts, specifically by supporting 22 school-based career planners, to keep young people in school, to help them graduate, and to make successful transitions to adulthood. LEEP expresses its goals in quantitative terms: (1) a graduation rate or still-in-school status of 90% or better in grade 12; (2) a dropout rate in grades 9-12 of 4% or less; (3) at least a combined 80% transition rate to postsecondary education, employment, or the military.

JCPS’s record of accomplishment deserves the attention of any who doubt that large, urban public school systems can succeed in graduating almost all of their students. In SY 1998-1999, the County had a dropout rate of 6% (2,381 students). Since then, the County’s dropout rate has fallen to 2.3% (898 students) in SY 2002-2003 and 2.9% (1,179 students) in SY 2003-2004. JCPS graduates, moreover, are making the grade beyond high school. Of the Class of 2004, 64% are in college, 22% are working, 5% are in vocational/technical schools, 5% are in both school and working, 3% are in the military, and only 1% are in neither school nor working.

A Public School System That Refuses to Accept Dropping Out

Kentucky’s largest school district, JCPS has 97,000 students, 13,000 employees, and 151 buildings. All 22 of its high schools are schools of choice, that is, they offer students and parents a wide variety of traditional academic programs as well as magnet and career academies. All general courses in English and mathematics have been eliminated and high state standards are stressed in every school, as is leading-edge educational technology. In 2004, the District was one of five finalists for the coveted Broad Foundation Prize for Urban Education.

Of particular interest in this study are, first, the County’s efforts to hold on to students who, in less supportive school systems, would be disruptive, expelled, and, ultimately, become dropouts and, second, the innovative outreach efforts of the Jefferson County High School (JCHS).

First, JCPS recognizes that often a student’s barrier to success in school comes from what happens beyond the school yard. “Through our partnership programs such as Family Resource & Youth Services Centers and Louisville Education and Employment Partnership,” said Marty Bell, “we try to address these external barriers. It may be clothing to attend school, an alarm clock to wake up, or a drug problem. In any case, services are in place to help the student overcome the barriers and be in school.”

Second, JCHS places great importance on student attendance. With the help of a grant from the state dropout prevention program, attendance advisors also serve as counselors and are often the first to detect students’ problems. Homes are called when students are not in class. Teachers make the first call, the attendance director the next. Gallop for the Goals, an attendance incentive program, conducts drawings and awards prizes for good attendance. Given that JCHS serves a population with many problems, the school’s 80% attendance rate is considered laudable.

What accounts for JCPS’ low dropout rate? Aside from superior instruction, challenging curricula, and competent leadership, credit must go to the school district’s philosophy of “a place for every child and youth.” Recognizing that there are many impediments to successful completion of a high school diploma, JCPS has constructed numerous options for students to meet state and district graduation standards. For example, said Bell, “We always

When we analyzed where our dropouts were occurring, we found many were kids coming back to us from the juvenile justice system. 90% of them subsequently failed to graduate. So, we opened a special school, richly staffed, to receive these kids and prepare them to re-enter our regular schools. Today the graduation rate of adjudicated youth is over 70%.”

—Marty Bell, Deputy to Superintendent

ask: ‘What does our data tell us?’ When we analyzed where our dropouts were occurring, we found many were kids coming back to us from the juvenile justice system. So, we opened a school to receive these kids and prepare them to re-enter our regular schools. We cut the dropout rate of these kids by over 50%.”

One of the most impressive and enviable features of JCPS’s management is its student data system. When a student first enters any school, he or she is assigned an identification number, which tracks that student’s progress, including transfer to another school, graduation, or dropping out. A list of absent students is regularly sent to each principal who is held accountable for those students. Kentucky uses the NCES dropout calculation, which until recently tracked students for 12 months and not just the school year. A student in Grades 9-11 who does not return to school in the fall and for whom there is not record of transfer is considered a dropout. Louisville has such a tight data system that it is able to report on dropout rates for each of the 9th-12th grade cohorts.

Louisville has been collecting this student data, by identification number, for 20 years, so that it can see patterns and make reliable projections for budget planning as well as academic accountability. On the fifth day of the school year, schools count the number of students present, and that amount is projected to the end of the month. The first allocation of funds is based on the count from the fifth day, with the projection to the end of September. Then, in January, there is a redistribution of funding to account

for students who have moved to other schools. The school district has a “hold harmless” provision so as not to take too much money away from any one school. Schools have to lose more than three percent of their students to have their funding decreased, but they gain funds if there is only a one percent increase in attendance.

In this way, the tracking system allows more accurate payments to schools and alternative education sites. Equally telling, it ensures academic accountability and puts JCPS far ahead of many, if not most, other school systems.

As a guide to assessing needed changes in its schools, JCPS’s leadership expends substantial resources on an annual Comprehensive School Survey measuring student attitudes, by school, by race, and compared with District-wide totals. For example, students were asked to rate the following features about school climate and atmosphere on a five-degree scale from agree to disagree:

- Most students obey school rules
- Most students show proper respect for adults in my school
- Adults in my school treat students fairly
- My teachers really care about me as a person
- This school gives students the recognition they deserve
- Overall, I would give my school a grade of ____.

Highly favorable responses predominated in the 2004-2005 survey.

JCPS intentionally uses afterschool time to supplement schooling. Funding from the Charles S. Mott Foundation helped the system to institute school-based afterschool programs, which now number 50. The District partners with groups like the Urban League, Boys and Girls Clubs, Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of America, YMCA, and others. These programs use the Kid Trax system, in which the student uses a programmed plastic card to enter an afterschool program. The District then browses the data to see who is skipping school but attending afterschool programs. Information on test scores, attendance, and truancy is shared with the afterschool program so that club personnel can help students reengage in school. All the partners believe that students who participate in afterschool activities do better in the regular classroom. Louisville’s mayor, Jerry Abramson, has urged all local youth groups to participate in data-sharing with JCPS and even budgets city funds to maintain this data-driven,



*A teacher works with a student on an eTutorial, an integral part of Jefferson County's mission to reach all students.
(Photo courtesy of JCPS)*

child/family-centered system.

Kentucky's 1990 School Accountability Act also created Family Resource Centers. Social workers were placed in every low-income school and charged with building links to outside agencies to get children to attend school. One-stop Neighborhood Places, often based in community organizations, offer families a range of assistance, such as child protective services; state, county, city health, and social services; food stamps; and mental health counseling. The eight Neighborhood Places were designed using data on truancy rates. Their sites are located on either school property or other county/city property. There are no turf battles between the school district and the city/county and data is widely shared across agencies.

To ensure that the Neighborhood Places succeed, city leaders have met every Friday morning for the past 13 years. The group includes the Deputy Mayor, Marty Bell of JCPS, representatives from the city health department, state health and human services, and Jefferson County regional directors. Bell reports that, no matter what, this meeting takes place and has led to much cooperation in fulfilling the common mission of helping youth and families to be more successful and healthy.

Some of the other flexible and innovative alternative arrangements that keep Jefferson County students engaged in school rather than dropping out follow:

JCPS eSchool

The JCPS eSchool enables students, including those in private and parochial schools and who are home-schooled, to eliminate course deficiencies or to earn additional credits online with an online teacher. Students pay \$100 per each half-credit course plus the cost of books or CD-ROMs. More than 55 different courses may be studied at the student's choice of time, place, and pace. They are always available worldwide 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

Algebra and reading labs help students reach proficiency from their 6.5-8.5 grade level at entrance. The school is the only one in the state to require a standard achievement test (the TABE) to graduate.

The JCPS eSchool has developed hundreds of single-topic eTutorials in all content areas. Students can complete these in 20-60 minutes each. They review basic concepts, help make up missed work and give teachers diagnostic tools to determine how much students are learning and understanding. Sample eTutorials include: Fahrenheit, Celsius, and Kelvin; Behavior of Gases; Basic Constitutional Principles; Generating Number Sequences; Comma Usage; and Elements of the Short Story. Student grades are based 50% on daily work, 40% on unit and final

exams, and 10% on special projects. The number of As and Bs earned helps students win grants under the state's Educational Excellence Scholarship program.

To extend and reinforce its eCourses and eTutorials, eSchool has also developed over 100 eSheets, handouts for teachers to use: "fun learning" activities, reference material (e.g., in science—a periodic table and a review of balancing chemical reactions). Extending its influence far beyond Jefferson County, the District has sold its eMaterials and its curricular workbooks to over 275 school systems in 27 states. (See <http://jcpseschool.org>)

Independent Study High School

Up to two credits per year may be earned through correspondence in the Independent Study High School. Persons who have been out of school for at least 10 years may participate and earn up to one-half of graduation requirements, while those over age 21 can earn one-fourth of the requirements through correspondence. Students pay tuition and workbook costs of \$50 per half unit of credit, plus the cost of textbooks. More than 40 courses are offered.

Liberty High School

A nontraditional, “safety net” school for academically unsuccessful students, Liberty High School (LHS) enables them to respond to “a hands-on, collaborative, performance-based, career-oriented, computer-assisted curriculum.” Students participate in a nine-week Discovery Program that teaches essential learning and life skills, including team-building, anger management, problem-solving, conflict resolution, career exploration, chemical dependency, and employability skills. To demonstrate support, parents must also attend Discovery once per week. The school’s Advisor/Advisee Program emphasizes service-learning as well as career assessments, job-shadowing opportunities, and co-op experiences. Liberty graduates must meet or exceed JCPS’s literacy and mathematics standards, and complete a senior project, a writing portfolio, and a service-learning component.

English as a Second Language

Students whose primary language is not English are offered intensive English communication and cultural understanding classes so that they can benefit from JCPS’s comprehensive academic program.

Buechel and Breckinridge Metropolitan High Schools

These schools serve students exhibiting inappropriate behavior (e.g., violence, disruption, drugs) or returning from adjudication with the goal of returning them to regular school. Together, their dropout rate was reduced, over time, from 60.7% to about 25%. Students’ tests scores are attributed to their former comprehensive high school, which creates an incentive for that school to want its students to do well. Principals are not permitted to exclude students in alternative schools or adjudicated youth as a way to raise their average student test score.

Homeless Education Program

This program provides academic services specifically targeted to some 4,850 homeless children and youth, of whom 1,291 are enrolled in Special Education, and 199 in self-contained classes.

Migrant Education Program

Student mobility is a major issue in JCPS; an average of 300 students change schools daily. The Migrant Education Program (MEP) offers computer instruc-

tion, family education, recreational activities, and transportation for about 100 migrant youth, 97% of whom are Latino, and their families. Twelve migrant students are enrolled in Special Education.

Teenage Parent Program

The Teenage Parent Program (TAPP) provides academic, medical, and social services for pregnant and parenting school-age students and their infants up to age four at two locations where Child Development Centers and Co-op Parenting programs are co-located.

An integral part of TAPP is played by career planners from the Louisville Education and Employment Partnership; they teach pre-employment and work-maturity skills and also assist in finding part-time and summer employment for TAPP students.

TAPP follows the curriculum of the JCPS, including middle, high, and precollegiate coursework. Classes taught by nurses are offered in pre-natal/postpartum, family planning, child development, childcare, and parenting skills. Diplomas are awarded either by the student’s home high school or by Jefferson County High School.

College Now!

College Now!, an eLearning partnership between JCPS High School, Jefferson Community College, and three other colleges enables 7,000 students—including some in Iraq and Japan—to earn both high school and college credit for the same course taught by dual-certified teachers. Thirty-three hours of on-line courses are available at a cost of \$50 per three-hour credit. Students who complete the comprehensive COMPASS survey and one additional course are not required to take remedial classes when they enter college. The Kentucky Community and Technical College System generates a college transcript upon successful completion of the courses.

Jefferson County High School

After the 1980 US Census revealed that 36.5% of the area’s population age 25 and older had not completed high school, JCPS responded in 1986 by inaugurating a new, more flexible model that would appeal to working young adults. The school was originally planned to accommodate 200 students, but over 700 enrolled in the first semester. Even in its first year, the County’s dropout rate fell by 30%.

For adults 21 years of age or older, for young

adults age 16-20 who dropped out of school, and for students at the 9th grade-level or above who meet certain academic criteria and commit to attend classes at least 15 hours a week, JCPS offers further opportunities to earn the high school diploma. Jefferson County High School (JCHS) enables adults to attend the academic classes and online studies at five locations around the County and at times convenient for them. Students may enter at any time and attend classes on a flexible schedule (8-11 a.m., Monday–Friday; 11-2 p.m., Monday–Friday; 6-9 p.m., Monday–Thursday). Motivated students can study three, six, nine, or even 12 hours per day. Classes are open year-round except for brief winter, spring, and summer breaks. A certified teacher and a teaching assistant work with classes averaging 31 students each.

This flexibility enables dropouts to hold a job, meet family responsibilities, and graduate when they have met JCPS's academic standards. These are generally considered rigorous: (e.g., four Carnegie Units of English, three each of science, mathematics, and social studies, with US history being mandatory, and nine other units, totaling 22); attaining 11th grade proficiency in mathematics and reading; and producing a writing portfolio. For new students whose placement pretest shows deficiencies in reading, math, and language, a basic skills class is prescribed to enhance basic skills before the student can earn high school credit.

In SY 2004-2005, 2,200 students attended JCHS's computer-driven, self-paced classes and 299 completed all requirements for the high school diploma. With its eSchool and summer school, JCHS serves about 2.5% of the County's total high school enrollment. Altogether, over 8,000 students have graduated from JCHS since 1986. Thus, JCPS pursues its historic mission of doing "whatever it takes" to help youth and young adults remove the stigma of being dropouts while at the same time attaining reasonably high academic standards.

JCPS is particularly active with programs for older youth and adults. In SY 2004-2005, enrollment in Adult Basic Education was 12,833; Lifelong Learning participants—4,759; ESL adult students, 1,657; GEDS awarded, 879; GED graduates advancing to postsecondary education, 105.

YouthBuild Louisville

Although JCPS is both imaginative and comprehensive in its commitment to serve all youth, there is still encouragement for nonprofit agencies to offer additional pathways for dropouts to join the mainstream. For example, like most communities surveyed in this report, Louisville has an active YouthBuild program. Its current \$1.9 million budget serves 35 current members and provides follow-up assistance for 84 YouthBuild Louisville (YBL) alumni.

Founded in 2000, the nonprofit Young Adult Development in Action, Inc. operates YBL with the assistance of a 45-member agency collaborative. In addition to funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the City of Louisville, YBL enjoys support from an impressive list of local government agencies, banks, unions, corporations, AmeriCorps, and private foundations, which provide funds, materials, expertise, and public encouragement.

JCPS recognizes YBL as an alternative e-School site, and its Adult Education Office supports the professional instruction of YBL's staff. In return, YBL students and staff provide community service to JCPS middle schools and proctor students for the state tests.

At least 75% of YBL enrollees are school dropouts working for a second chance to turn their lives around. Over 60% of its participants are young parents and 30% are young women. They know that YBL provides not only life skills and hands-on construction experience but also partnerships with Jefferson County Community College and the Jefferson Community and Technical College Systems to provide a "seamless transition" from GED preparation to college and today's world of work. YBL graduates earn AmeriCorps Education Awards which pave the way for further education.

YBL has 10 full-time and six part-time staff and one full-time AmeriCorps volunteer. In an effort to diversify funding, it is taking on fee-for-service projects (e.g., rehabbing homes and community facilities for Metro government and training adult residents of a housing site to work on private construction crews under HUD's Hope VI program). For further information about YouthBuild, see Chapter 17.)

Contact Information

For more information about JCPS alternative programs:

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Jefferson County Public Schools
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For more information about Jefferson County High School or its eSchool:

Buell Snyder, Director/Principal
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For more information about YouthBuild Louisville:

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CHAPTER 3

Austin, Texas

- *A haven for politically fine-tuned educational and social entrepreneurs*
- *A full plate of experienced-based approaches to recovery*

Austin has become a conspicuous case of a community that is trying to do right for its residents. Nowhere is this more evident than in its notable lineup of programs to turn dropouts and youth at risk of dropping out back onto paths leading to achievement and respectability.

No single theme distinguishes Austin's efforts to reconnect dropouts. After decades of experience, it has evolved into a singular blend of unquantifiable parts of well-tested leadership, an easy familiarity among tough-minded social entrepreneurs, political smarts in fund-raising, and a community-wide desire to make a vital difference. Also not to be overlooked is the vestigial legacy of the War on Poverty, whose echoes of empathy combined with heavy doses of tough love still reverberate in the often-harsh politics of the state capital.

Like most cities, Austin does not have a comprehensive strategy or a community-wide consensus about how to reconnect out-of-school youth to its economic and social mainstream. But the area's cultural values—those of an informed and caring community—rightly regard the dropout problem as a high priority. This concern, in turn, enables women and men with entrepreneurial and leadership talent to construct a number of effective recovery vehicles, some of which are now operating in their third decade.

Austin prides itself on its top-flight educational and cultural institutions and its leading high-tech industries. Its residents describe their city as particularly education-oriented and boast of a business community that understands the intimate connection between the availability of skilled human resources and the corporate bottom line. In 2004, for example, Austin voters overwhelmingly approved six school bond issues totaling \$519.5 million.

In 2000, Austin's population was 656,562 and the Austin Metropolitan Area numbered 1.2 million. In the city proper, 19.37% of the inhabitants

were ages 5-19. There were 33,311 residents (8.3%) with 9th to 12th grade education but who lacked a diploma. Just under 72% of Austin residents aged 16 and older were in the labor force and 4.4% of the labor force was unemployed. Overall, 13.0% of Austin residents with children under age 18 were living below the poverty line.

Austin Independent School District

Austin Independent School District (AISD) and its 107 campuses enroll 79,788 students with 20,363 in high school, 15,851 in middle school, and 43,574 in prekindergarten and elementary school. The majority (54.65%) of Austin's students are Latino, 28.97% are White, 13.35% are African American, 2.78% are Asian, and 0.25% are Native American.

Eliminating or greatly reducing Austin's dropout population has been an AISD commitment since at least 2000. In February 2001, the District adopted a "Comprehensive Dropout Reduction/Prevention Program" created by a 55-member task force of educators, parents, and community leaders. As articulated by Superintendent Pat D. Forgione, Jr., the District's charge was to "Educate Every Child Every Day—We Can't Afford to Lose Even One!"

But this effort was not to be a public relations campaign. Rather, the overriding task was to create a reliable database. Armed with this essential tool, the District would have the means to best allocate resources, ensure accountability, install a wide range of preventive resources, and improve services for young people, both in the schools and in the community. Taken together, these steps would give dropouts second chances for success.

In four of the city's lowest-achieving high schools, the Pregnancy, Education, and Parenting Program (PEP) helps young parents remain in school through graduation, develop good parenting skills, and take advantage of such supports as childcare, health services, and employment counseling.

A designated "Impact Team" on each of the

District's 107 campuses is charged with carrying out the Dropout Reduction/Prevention Program and, according to the Task Force's direction, should "by persistence move beyond a pathological view of the problem and towards a solution-focused approach." Led by each school's principal or assistant principal, these teams unite the expertise of counselors, special education and traditional classroom teachers, the school nurse, dropout prevention and parent intervention specialists, and personnel of Communities in Schools (CIS), a nonprofit organization located on campus.

AISD uses a "Solution-Focused Problem-Solving Approach" in which students' academic, attendance, and behavioral problems are addressed en bloc through various levels of intervention services. These include conferences with students and parents, withdrawal of student privileges, crisis intervention, connection with systems of care, and wrap-around services offered by the community's social, physical, and mental health services. Tracking the Impact Teams' effectiveness, improvements in student discipline, attendance, and grades were recorded in about 80% of reported interventions. In the view of former Task Force member John Fitzpatrick, now a School Board member, the Impact Teams for the first time "located ownership of, and responsibility for," reduction of the dropout problem. With the issues identified, and critical data in hand, specific measures, like the Impact Teams, could then be crafted for implementation.

AISD's coordinator of Dropout Prevention and Reduction, Dr. Linelle Clark-Brown, also works outside AISD. To help young people who have left AISD before graduation, her office collaborates with a citywide network of GED programs in 12 local academies and community-based organizations, including ASPIRE, Urban League, Goodwill Industries, El Buen Samaritano, adult community education, as well as five diploma-granting programs. Students living outside Austin's city limits are also referred to at least six other resources, including a nearby Job Corps Center, for literacy training and completion of either the GED or a high school diploma.

Austin recognizes that it has much more to do in dropout prevention and in the area's dropout recovery efforts, but it takes some satisfaction from high school completion rates that are substantially above those of other cities as well those of the state of Texas as a whole. For the Class of 2003, the District

reported a graduation rate of 84.2% versus Texas's reported 78.8%; a GED award rate of 3.3% versus Texas's 3.0%; those continuing enrollment in the District's high schools at 7.9% versus Texas's 11.9%; and an official dropout rate (over four years) of 4.5% compared with 6.2% for the state. (Absent a uniform national method to determine dropout rates, figures like these are subject to substantial controversy.)

Three diploma-awarding programs, **Gonzalo Garza Independence High School**, **American Youth Works**, and **Austin Can!**, form the core of Austin's effort to reconnect out-of-school youth with society's educational, social, and economic mainstream.

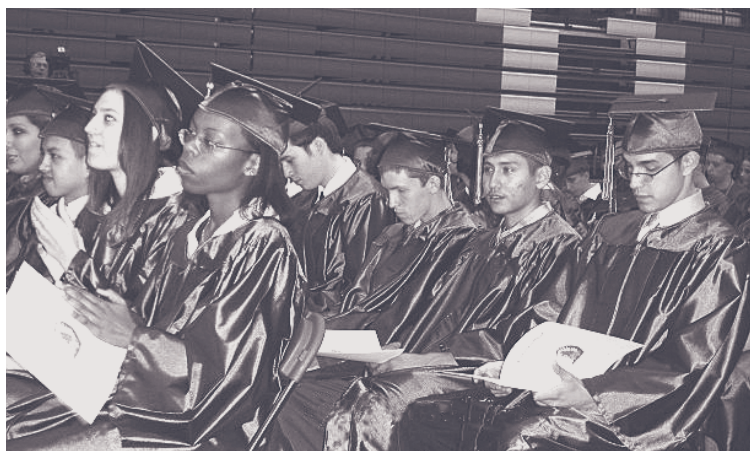
Gonzalo Garza Independence High School

Opened in 1998 with the mission of "removing traditional barriers" to high school completion, Garza is a year-round Austin ISD high school for students who have completed at least 10 credits (e.g., juniors and seniors) and who wish to earn a high school diploma. Garza is an inner-city, urban, open-enrollment, open-entry/open-exit school of choice, and students apply with a written application form, whether they are presently enrolled elsewhere in Austin or have been out of school for some time. Overall, 98% of Garza students are identified by the state as "at-risk."

Garza is fully accredited and students earn their diplomas after passing state and local requirements, including the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) or the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), and completing an exit portfolio. In its first seven years, Garza graduated 1,065 students and currently enrolls 321. Of its 201 graduates in 2004, 88% requested transcripts for college or other advanced training. In 2005, there were 132 graduates and 112 requested transcripts to attend postsecondary institutions.

The dynamo behind Garza is Victoria Baldwin, Garza's founding and current Principal. A no-nonsense veteran educator, she believes that all Garza students have the ability to earn a diploma. Of Garza students, Baldwin said, "These kids are the pioneers. They're the ones who are brave. They're the ones who are taking charge of their lives. They're committed to fulfilling the democratic principles that will keep us alive."

While offering a self-paced, individually tailored, academically rigorous program, Garza meets



Left: Garza students at graduation in 2005. Right: 2005 Garza graduate speaks at the graduation ceremony. (Photos courtesy of Gonzalo Garza Independence High School)

student needs and interests by providing extensive career education, counseling, and support services. Garza places students at the center, offering a flexible schedule and curriculum to meet the needs of its diverse student population. Students decide when to come to school. There are no penalties for absences, other than the natural consequence of not getting work done. Baldwin has charged her teachers, who are called “facilitators,” with developing the school’s curriculum, comprised primarily of course packets that students complete at their own pace at school with close supervision of their facilitators. Garza has 18 facilitators who offer 102 courses. The school schedule is specifically arranged to allow all facilitators to meet for a period of common planning time at the end of each day.

Career exploration is a major focus of the Garza high school. A school-to-career specialist provides job search assistance for all students, as well as graduates; arranges campus visits to a variety of higher education institutions; places interns with area companies; facilitates job shadowing, career fieldtrips, and company tours; conducts workshops on college preparation, life skills, small business, college financial aid, and accessing online job listings and employer opportunities.

Garza has designed and implemented a four-credit thematic, interdisciplinary program called “CSI Garza,” comprised of chemistry, integrated physics and chemistry, business computer information systems and criminal investigation. It partners with the Austin Police Department and Forensic Lab scientists, the Texas Rangers, and the Department of

Public Safety to understand how school curriculum and real world problem-solving interact. Students have access to forensic chemists, lab technicians, ballistics experts, and police personnel, and participate in crime scene-based labs. By working with experts in the field, students develop an appreciation for the highly complex structures needed for living in communities and are given daily opportunities to exercise their constitutional rights with responsibility.

Mastery of information technology is a central theme at Garza’ the school was recognized in 2001 as one of the nation’s “Top 100 Most-Wired Schools.” A full-time technology facilitator and a technology support staff member give students multiple opportunities to develop technology in Business Computer Information Systems, Computer Applications, Media (Audio and Video) Technology, Graphic Arts I and II, Advertising Design, Introduction to Programming, 2D and 3D Animation, Multimedia, and Web Mastering. Many other courses also integrate technology, such as desktop publishing into their curricula.

Through its on-site partnership with Communities in Schools (CIS), Garza also offers a broad range of free support services to students. These are provided by social workers, intern and AmeriCorps volunteers. CIS services include individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, tutoring and mentoring, health referrals, help with Medicaid, food stamps, housing issues, birth control resources, legal aid, custody advice, community service options, and referrals to cooperating outside agencies.

“Imagine a high school where students are in control of their destiny. Imagine a high school that believes that students’ environment and past history does not have to decide their future. Imagine a high school that teaches that a student’s family problems and poor neighborhood do not have to dictate their personal success in school or work. Imagine a high school that considers a student’s personal adversities and life difficulties as strengths that they can harness for their personal betterment. Imagine a high school that inspires hope and teaches that the small steps that a student takes can lead to big changes in their life. Imagine a high school where each principal, teacher, social worker, and staff member is convinced that every student has capacities that can be built upon to assure a positive outcome for that student. Imagine a high school where at-risk and dropout youth attend school, graduate from high school, and successfully transition to college and work. Imagine Gonzalo Garza Independence High School, a solution-focused high school, where dreams come true.”

—A Solution-focused High School
Drs. Cynthia Franklin and Calvin Streeter

Garza is a leading practitioner of a mental health model developed two decades ago at the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Family Therapy Center. “Brief, Solution-focused Intervention” was designed to work with multi-problem, impoverished, and hard-to-reach individuals and families. The model is “strengths-based,” offering specific skills and change strategies for facilitating positive behaviors. It is future-oriented and goal-directed, and offers a set of clear and simple intervention methods that focus on making changes in perception, behavior, and social environment of people.

This intervention model offers all school staff specific tools for fostering strengths in their students. At Garza, practitioners assist students in using solution-focused intervention skills to develop an image of a realistic solution, to discover ways in which the solution is already occurring in their lives, to determine small, measurable steps toward a resolution, and to take immediate actions to make a difference in educational and life outcomes.

Garza’s per student expenditure (SY 2004-2005) is \$7,987. The school receives no AISD-initiated grants or any federal funds, although the other 11 Austin ISD high schools do.

At Garza, a student is withdrawn only if he or

she habitually fails to attend school or fails to make progress indicative of a commitment to graduating from high school. Despite the school’s flexible curriculum, small learning communities, and numerous support services, Baldwin points out that some students are “unwilling to do what it takes.” Baldwin does not let her compassion for young people dilute rigorous academic standards at Garza. She and her team have designed a school that works for youth who were not succeeding in their previous schooling, but who grasp the opportunity to engage with a coherent, relevant, challenging curriculum. Garza boasts an amazing 2.7% dropout rate. Said Baldwin, “I would rather have that than impressive attendance rates.” (Garza’s overall attendance in SY 2004-2005, 78%, was considered “below expectations” by the District.)

Gonzalo Garza has won well-deserved recognition. The US Departments of Education and Justice highlighted it as a model in violence prevention. Garza was featured in a 2004 article in *Texas Monthly*. The *Austin Chronicle* named Garza “The Best Public School Model” in Austin. The Vera Institute of Justice in New York and the Academy for Education Development Center for Youth Development and Policy Research in Washington, DC also rated the school as exemplary. Principal Victoria Baldwin serves on Harvard University’s National Principals’ Advisory Board and was awarded the Excellence in Education Leadership Award by The University Council for Educational Administration and the Hero of Safety Award by The Texas School Safety Center.

American Youth Works

For 30 years, American Youth Works (AYW) has been pioneering creative approaches to educating youth who have not done well in traditional schools or who prefer experiential and community-based settings to exclusively classroom learning. AYW sees itself as a “one-stop integration model, combining education, job training, counseling, child care vouchers, and partnerships with other programs for health care, housing, and transportation.” In that way, AYW believes it is “transforming the old model of fragmented human services and failed school programs into an efficient and cost-effective model that genuinely moves people from subsidy to self-sufficiency.”

Richard H. Halpin, the founder and CEO of the

AYW is transforming the old model of fragmented human services and failed school programs into an efficient and cost-effective model that genuinely moves people from subsidy to self-sufficiency.

nonprofit community-based organization, claims young people are the secret to its success. “They are survivors,” said Halpin. “Despite the horrific things that have happened in their lives, they come to AYW wanting to be better parents, workers, and community citizens. They just need help getting there.”

In essence, AYW is a system-integrated school and community development center that served 1,132 young people in 2004. Its eclectic components are continuously refined and nourished by the staff’s unusual entrepreneurial energy. One way to depict that energy is to note that AYW receives 43% of its funding from federal agencies, (primarily Department of Labor and AmeriCorps/Corporation for National and Community Service), 34% from state charter school funding, 10% from city and county sources, and the remaining 13% from a wide variety of corporations, foundations, and individual donors. As is the case with other youth-serving nonprofit organizations, the ability to put all the funding streams together epitomizes entrepreneurial leadership.

To accomplish its mission, AYW has developed cooperative agreements and partnerships with a huge cross-section of such of federal, state, and local agencies such as the Texas Education Agency, Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, Austin Independent School District, Travis County Natural Resource Department, City of Austin Parks and Recreation, City of Austin Preserves, Austin Housing Authority, Lower Colorado River Authority, AmeriCorps, YouthBuild, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, US Department of Energy, and Peoples Community Clinic. These relationships set AYW apart from most stand-alone schools and youth programs with limited outreach and scant access to their community’s resources.

Halpin is an evangelist for investing in youth and developing alternatives to traditional schools. He speaks and practices the language of investment

and personal responsibility that appeals to the Texas business community, as well as the state’s conservative and frugal legislature. Said Halpin:

A fight to create a self-reliant Texas is underway. It is being waged because recovering school dropouts is not only critically and ethically important, it is also a practical solution to revitalizing our economy, not just for today but for decades to come. In this struggle, generations of lives and billions of taxpayer dollars will either be saved or lost. We will either see reduced taxes, reduced prison costs and a booming economy, or debilitating tax burdens, bursting jails and an economy on the downslide.

In a similar vein, Halpin champions AYW’s goal: “to educate and inspire ‘at-promise’ Texans, age 16-26, to change from tax spenders into tax generators, entrepreneurs, job creators, contributing citizens, and great parents who will raise self-reliant, contributing children.”

...to educate and inspire “at-promise” Texans, age 16-26, to change from tax spenders into tax generators, entrepreneurs, job creators, contributing citizens, and great parents who will raise self-reliant, contributing children.

In 1986, Halpin got the Texas legislature to conduct the first study of the economic costs of dropouts. The Texas Dropout Survey, conducted by the independent, San Antonio-based Intercultural Development Research Association, found that in one year, 86,276 students had not graduated from Texas public high schools, costing the state \$17 billion in forgone income, lost tax revenues, and increased job training, welfare, unemployment, and criminal justice costs.¹ With one-third of its young people failing to graduate from high school, Texas cannot support the cost, argues Halpin, who continues to preach economic self-interest to employers, taxpayers, and policymakers all around the state.

American Youth Works offers youth aged 14-24 a wide range of education options, the descriptions of which follow.



Proud American YouthWorks high school graduates from the class of 2003. (Photo courtesy of American Youth Works)

AYW Charter School, a Service-Learning High School

AYW's Charter School, begun in 1996, has awarded 485 diplomas since its inception. It is designed to educate youth considered at risk of dropping out or who have already dropped out from the AISD and surrounding districts. From only 30 graduates in its early years, the school has grown to graduating a class of 136 youth in June 2005. All of these young people were former AISD or surrounding area students who had left school without earning a diploma.

The school, which offers open enrollment and uses experiential and practical educational methodology, is project-based and incorporates service-learning. Its focus is on producing actual products so that students understand the connection between classroom learning and the application of that knowledge. Community service activities built into the curriculum encourage students to strengthen their connections to the community, to develop an ethic of service, and to see themselves as capable learners and partners with adults in devising solutions to local problems. The school is a National Service-Learning Leader School, the first charter school in the nation to be designated so by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Students at AYW Charter School attend academic classes for four hours per day in either a morning or afternoon session. This allows them to engage in the numerous other programs at AYW. Classes at AYW Charter School are small and cover

a core curriculum of math, science, English, social studies, and art. AYW Charter School is held to the same accountability standards under NCLB as other high schools in Texas. Because of the nature of its student population, in 2005 the school failed to meet the graduation rate standards, a fact that has Halpin strongly advocating for adjustments to the NCLB standards to make provision for alternative schools.

Texas' charter school legislation provides AYW Charter School an annual per pupil payment of \$4,920. Federal IDEA funds and \$115 per student from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (in 2005, during the first year of a three-year grant) also support the school.

Casa Verde Builders

Following national models such as YouthBuild and Youth Service and Conservation Corps (see Chapters 17 and 18), AYW's Casa Verde Builders tracks enrollees' construction skills by building single-family, energy-efficient, affordable housing in Austin's poorest neighborhoods. Simultaneously, students study to complete their diploma or to earn a GED. In Casa Verde and in AYW's new Environmental Corps, a total of 126 enrollees work in crews of 8 to 12 members each. Physical work on their projects runs from 8:00 a.m. to about 2:00 p.m. when they return from the field to study. To date, 89 houses have been built and sold to low-income families, adding \$8,900,000 in housing stock to Austin's depressed neighborhoods and generating hundreds of thousands of dollars in new property taxes.

"Service-learning is an educational methodology that can transform the lives of students. As an approach to experiential learning, it links active student learning with service projects that address real community needs, building real skills for citizenship, and life-time learning. By actively engaging in their own learning process, students are able to bridge the gap between theory and practice while connecting to the real world—their local community—to accomplish meaningful goals. This active engagement turns the learning situation into one that is intrinsically motivating to the students, which results in more meaningful learning and higher knowledge retention."

—American Youth Works

As participants in an AmeriCorps national volunteer program, Casa Verde members earn a monthly living allowance averaging \$880 plus health insurance. While those who complete 1,700 hours of service earn an award of \$4,725 for postsecondary education, most enrollees serve only 8-11 months before moving into private employment.

Casa Verde's many awards include recognition from the Peter Drucker Foundation, the Promising and Effective Practices Network (PEPNet), Points of Light Foundation, Texas Society of Architects, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and National Association of Home Builders, which awarded Casa Verde its 2005 Gold Medal.

AYW Environmental Corps

Another AmeriCorps national volunteer service program at AYW, the Environmental Corps allows an average of 56 youth ages 17-25 to help restore and preserve parks and public lands in Texas, while simultaneously earning a diploma, a GED, money to pay off student loans, or funds to pursue further education. Corps members may serve 6 to 24 months building trails, maintaining caves and parks, and teaching watershed education to community groups. Over the past nine years, they have cleared and maintained 200,000 yards of park trails and removed 1,500 yards of trash from public lands.

Like other AYW programs, the Environmental Corps has received recognition, in this case by Clean Texas 2000 Environmental Excellence, Points of Light Foundation, and The Governor's Best Environmental Program Award.



American YouthWorks AmeriCorps Environmental (E-Corps) volunteers working on a trail. (Photo courtesy of American Youth Works)



American YouthWorks AmeriCorps (Casa Verde Builders) volunteers building the floor of a new house. (Photo courtesy of American Youth Works)

Support Services

Like most effective dropout recovery and youth development, AYW maintains integrated service facilities to support its educational program components. These include a health clinic; a career, college, and job placement center; and an extensive counseling staff.

AYW's annual budget is \$6.6 million, which supports the staff of 86 who serve over 1,100 young people annually in various programs. Overall, AYW reports that its programs generated over one million community service hours over the past nine years and helped its enrollees earn over \$3 million in AmeriCorps postsecondary education awards. As Halpin and his colleagues never tire of mentioning, AYW programs have saved the United States and Texas taxpayers more than \$200 million by helping to convert tax-using dropouts into tax-paying graduates.

Austin Can!/Texans Can!

Austin *Can!*, which opened in 2002 and graduated a senior class of 31 in 2005, is one of the city's exemplary diploma-granting alternative education and youth development programs. It is part of the 20-year-old Texans Can! organization. The mission of Austin Can! is to empower disadvantaged youth and their families by breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty and economic dependence. A public charter school currently serving 350 students, Austin *Can!* is accredited by the state to award high school diplomas.

The Texans *Can!* model illuminates a rapidly growing movement in Texas (which is also being promoted outside the state as America *Can!*) by business and community leaders concerned about the magnitude of their local dropout problem.

The average enrolling student dropped out of traditional high school, reads at a 4th-grade level, and often is beset by issues such as of teen pregnancy, juvenile justice, and poverty. Over 70% of Texans *Can!* students are identified as economically challenged under the National School Lunch Program.

Texans *Can!*'s visionary founder, Dr. Grant East, described the thought process behind the organization:

We found that dropouts did not have appreciably more learning disabilities than the general population. Rather, the common thread we found in these students was the chaos and dysfunction in their families and in their personal lives. Very few of our students had even one parent who finished high school...These children were expected to fail and had been told so repeatedly!...The perceived educational problems of our students were not educational problems at all. We realized that before we could educate these children, we had to raise their level of expectation, and then deal aggressively with the personal issues in their lives.

Texans *Can!* was originally a ministry-sponsored residential program in Dallas that provided juvenile offenders with a second chance to turn their lives around. After initial results proved positive, East, an engineer and scientist, enlisted many of the city's civic and corporate leaders to support a new recovery model.

High school dropouts and nonadjudicated youth in Dallas were introduced to an enhanced curriculum stressing strong interpersonal relationships between students and specially trained advisors. As it does today, the model focused on personalized learning plans, small classes, intensive counseling, and flexible scheduling. Student advisors each serve 45 students, while teachers generally have classes of about 15.

As Dr. East relates:

We may be the only people in our students' lives that they can count on, and they realize that we are there for them. When you walk through our school, you can see that tremendous relationships are built—between our staff, our students, their families, and our communities.

We have moved students across town to stay with relatives, moved young ladies out of physically abusive situations, and even gone to court with students who have committed minor offenses. We also provide daycare vouchers and bus passes when they are needed.

According to Tasha Talton, Assistant Principal of Austin *Can!* Academy, "It is with the student advisor's help—by noticing a problem, by intervening before it is too late, by positively interacting with the student's family—that a student is provided with all the social and emotional skills they need to succeed."

Academic classes run either from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. or 1 to 5 p.m. and focus intensively on academic achievement and character development. An academically rigorous curriculum, personalized computer-assisted learning, and life-skill components are important features of the program.

An integral component of the educational model involves students, parents, and student advisors working together to complete the student's personal graduation plan. Students who struggle to meet these goals by the end of the school year are offered the chance to attend summer school free of charge. In effect, this extends the school year from the standard 180 to 202 days.

The Completion Coordinator ensures that effective collaboration takes place among teachers, student advisors, parents, principals, mentors, and tutors. One of the duties of the Coordinator is to ensure that every student, upon completing high school, will have a plan to attend college, the military, trade school, or to receive additional training. A free Saturday School allows students to work on areas of academic weakness and personal development and to create stronger parent-student-teacher bonds.

Based on a cardinal Texans *Can!* principle—"Discipline in Private, Reward in Public"—student advisors, not teachers, discipline students privately. A public awards ceremony, or "Winners' Circle," rewards academic accomplishments, but also focuses on character, attitude, behavior, and attendance. This recognition serves to further the academies' daily attention to building self-esteem and acts as motivation to the students to stay in school. Graduation ceremonies, complete with caps and gowns and much celebration, also recognize student effort and success.

In June 2005, Texans *Can!* held its largest graduation ceremony to date. Commencement speaker Dr. Shirley Neeley, Texas Commissioner of Education,

encouraged the graduates to continue their education: “Don’t stop with a high school diploma. Continue to learn, and get that college degree.”

As of 2005, more than 38,000 young people have been served by the 10 Texans *Can!* Academies (four in Dallas, including one on the campus of Paul Quinn College, two each in Houston and Fort Worth, one each in Austin and San Antonio). Total student enrollment today exceeds 7,500 while 907 students earned their diploma during SY 2004-2005.

The Texans *Can!* 2004 financial report shows state funding of \$17.9 million (62%) for charter school support, federal revenues of \$1.6 million (6%), and private sector fundraising of \$9 million (32%), for a total budget of approximately \$28.5 million. State payments, which vary by weighted formula for special services, resulted in an average state funding of \$4,972 per pupil. To raise fully one-third of its budget from private sources requires a prodigious year-round effort. Texans *Can!* excels at a variety of fund-raising drives, such as, “Cars for Kids” donations and weekly auctions of used automobiles, RVs, airplanes, and boats; classic golf tournaments; and celebrity luncheons and award functions in honor of prominent civic leaders.

In October 2004, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) stated that between 1985 and 2004, two million Texas students failed to graduate from high school, which cost Texas more than \$5 billion in foregone income and lost tax revenues. As former State Board of Education Member Dr. Rosie Sorrells stated, “Texans *Can!* is giving young people the opportunity to lead fulfilling and productive lives while supporting our urban communities.”

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Other References

Solution-focused Accountability Schools for the Twenty-First Century: A Training Manual for Gonzalo Garza Independence High School was developed by Drs. Cynthia Franklin and Calvin Streeter of the University of Texas School of Social Work, with support from the Hogg Foundation. This evaluation of Garza Independence High School found it “an effective dropout retrieval and prevention program which also greatly impacted [student] desire and motivation to attend college and other postsecondary education.” The useful manual can be accessed at <http://utexas.edu/courses/franklin/garza.doc>.

The independent, San Antonio-based Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) conducts an annual student attrition study. IDRA reported 36% of the freshman class of 2001-2002 left school prior to graduating from a Texas public high school in the SY 2004-2005. See the IDRA website for more information on education in Texas:
www.idra.org

¹ Cárdenas, J. A., Robledo, M., Supik, J. D., Cortez, A., Johnson, R., Ladogana, A., et al. (1986). *Texas school dropout survey project: A summary of findings*. San Antonio, TX: Intercultural Development Research Association.

CHAPTER 4

Salt Lake City, Utah

- *A large public educational facility that flexibly meets the needs of a highly diverse student population of at-risk youth and recent immigrant adults*
- *An alternative public high school model that transcends usual definitions of dropout prevention and recovery*

Salt Lake City enjoys a growing, vibrant, and highly diversified economy with an unemployment rate of only 5%, slightly below the national average. Demand for both entry-level and highly skilled workers is high, and the area has become a magnet for high tech industries and a new home for immigrants and refugees from around the world. The public schools of Salt Lake City serve 27,000 students, of whom 52% are members of racial or ethnic minority groups.

Horizonte Instruction and Training Center, a part of the Salt Lake School District, is a multicultural, ambitiously innovative and comprehensive, multicampus school whose many flexible programs serve the needs of students and employers throughout the Salt Lake area. Horizonte (which means “Horizon”) operates five different programs under the motto “as far as the eye can see, as far as the mind can reach,” and each year over 9,000 people avail themselves of Horizonte’s expansive offerings at 29 sites around the city. Horizonte High School, one of four Salt Lake City public high schools, serves about 1,400 students. The program also offers a junior high school program at four sites to 50 students. About 4,300 adults of all ages pursue basic literacy and high school completion in Horizonte’s Adult High School, some 3,600 persons study English in the English as a Second Language program, and about 180 teen parents a year are enrolled in the Young Parents Program (YEP). In 2004, high school-age youth earned 624 diplomas and another 150 completed all GED requirements at Horizonte.

According to Principal James Andersen, the year-round school and its staff function as service providers to meet the diverse needs of equally diverse consumers. Andersen believes that if you build an institution responsive to the needs of the constituent population, they will come. Come they have, and in large numbers. The alternative high school, once

considered a second chance setting for the city’s at-risk youth, is increasingly becoming a first choice for many young people, including some students who are not doing well in their neighborhood schools. Thus, the Horizonte model transcends definitions of dropout recovery and prevention. Is it a recovery or “last resort” program because the Salt Lake District refers students with low attendance and achievement, or who pose behavior problems at their home schools? Or is it a dropout prevention program because most of its students are not officially dropped from the district’s rolls and, increasingly, students are choosing Horizonte as their high school of choice before having attended other district schools? What is clear is that the highly popular Horizonte model is one which many first-chance schools might consider as they undergo reform. Horizonte’s programs for refugees and new immigrants, who hail from 88 countries and speak 82 different languages and dialects, are especially critical to preparing Utah’s newest residents for life in America.

Ninety percent of Horizonte’s students live at or below the poverty level. Among Horizonte’s students in the programs Grades 7-12, 65% are ethnic or racial minorities, as are 80% of its adult program learners. Among its high schoolers, 68% come from single-parent households.

Leading the learner-focused Horizonte enterprise is a visionary principal, James Andersen, a 30-year veteran of the school district who, one immediately understands, is passionately committed to improving the life chances of his students. James, as everyone calls him, has three equally energetic and creative assistant principals, David Martinez, David Chavez, and Mindi Mortensen, who share the leadership of Horizonte’s many sites and programs. Andersen, said one staffer, “is an egalitarian and a champion of due process and consistency for all students. He is masterful in budgetary matters and in creating com-

munity coalitions for redressing the lack of legislative appropriations and support. His persistence in putting student needs first and making teachers accountable for the success of learners in their classrooms is validated by student performance, showing that his philosophy is also measurably correct.”

Another invaluable Horizonte asset is Director of Community Relations, Joanne Milner, a former state legislator and Salt Lake City councilwoman, whose deep belief in Horizonte’s mission and political skills win many supporters for the Center.

Horizonte,” said Milner, “is the epitome of the American Dream. It is the heart and soul of our community, and the hope for our future. It is successful because of the integrity, love, and respect generated by the community of students, teachers, staff, and volunteers. Students of all ages and ethnic origins are given equitable opportunity to acquire essential educational and workplace skills.

Salt Lake District School Superintendent McKell Withers, like his predecessors, is very supportive of Horizonte and its leadership and grants them a large degree of operational autonomy.

Horizonte’s main site is a multi-level building that once housed the city employment services offices. Now beautifully renovated with large-scale community input, the building has an open atrium planned around the philosophy that everyone should be able to see and interact with everyone else in the building. It reflects the needs of the clientele and includes a day care center, a library containing toys, games, and various books on tape and in multiple languages, classrooms with phones, and extensive and up-to-date computer facilities, including three technology labs.

In addition to the main facility, 20 adult and nine youth satellite sites house Horizonte’s commitment to carry learning to wherever its clients are. Using community resources, classes are held in a variety of public and private agencies, including excess space in public schools, YWCA Centers, Salvation Army Office, Boys and Girls Clubs sites, Odyssey House, Department of Workforce Services, Salt Lake Community College, and various residential sites, including Adult Probation and Parole and Rehabilitation Centers. Overall, Horizonte has educational partnerships with over 50 public, private, and nonprofit agencies.



Horizonte students earn high school diplomas to improve their own lives and the lives of their children. (Photo courtesy of Horizonte Instruction and Training Center)

The High School

Horizonte accepts students at any time and operates on a year-round schedule. Each year, the school offers 1,200 to 1,400 students in Grades 9-12 (mostly juniors and seniors) small, structured classes. At any one time Horizonte has about 800 students enrolled in one of its nine sites. While in the past students were referred to Horizonte from a traditional Salt Lake high school for nonattending, nonachieving, or presenting behavior problems, increasingly parents are requesting that their children be placed at Horizonte, an indicator of the school’s tremendous appeal. The school provides a large choice of academic and occupational courses and meets Utah state and district academic standards. Significantly, Horizonte’s recent scores in reading and writing generally exceed those attained by similar populations attending traditional schools serving more affluent families.

Classes are offered mornings, afternoons and evenings, 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday. Students participate in field experiences, including the Math Engineering and Science Achievement (MESA) program, Spy Hop Productions for Documentary Filmmaking, Salt Lake Area Chamber of Commerce Business Week, the Salt Lake Rotary Club Interact Service Club and Leadership Conference, numerous community service projects, and classes in parenting and child development. At one

point during every school session, no matter where the high school students are, all are expected to read for 20 continuously. Young parents, too, are taught to read to their infants and young children.

An individualized Directed Studies Program (DSP) serves 11th and 12th graders who are unable to attend school during regular hours due to their full-time employment or personal and family needs. About 50 DSP students graduate annually and 8 to 10 return to their home schools. A Youth-in-Custody program (YIC), for students in custody of the state's Division of Family Services or Juvenile Justice Services provides a continuum of educational programs for students in Grades 9-12 based on their individual needs, including mentoring, small size classrooms, and counseling. YIC staff work closely with proctor families, trackers, and caseworkers to support the students in comprehensive programs. The vocational guidance/career exploration component, including a mentoring program with Salt Lake City Youth Works and PacifiCorp (Utah Power and Light Utility) employees, as well as co-op placements in the community, help students proceed at their own pace to complete a regular high school diploma.

At Horizonte's South City site, junior and senior students study one-half day in classrooms and one-half day in vocational training or college classes. Those who score at 10th grade or above can take concurrent college courses (14 available), tuition-free, at Salt Lake Community College.

Among Horizonte's many satellite sites is South City Campus, which serves 60 students (30 in the morning and 30 in the afternoon) in a trailer on the grounds of a public elementary school. Students in Grades 11 and 12 are taught by a teacher in a one-room school that draws on the resources of the larger community. Students complete 20 hours of community service by working as lunchroom or playground aides at the elementary school and also take courses at the nearby community college. Students work both individually and in groups in all subject areas. According to the teacher, "When [students'] knowledge of the subject gets beyond mine, they are referred to the appropriate source to continue their studies up to their maximum level of interest and capacity."

Horizonte administrators are able to structure a flexible and responsive program because they can recruit and hire teachers who buy into this philosophy of service to the students, who especially want to teach at Horizonte. "If you can't change the system,"

"There's nothing wrong with these kids. The problem is the way they are treated in institutions. It's not the kids; it's how the kids are treated that elicits the bad response."

—Horizonte Principal James Andersen

said Assistant Principal David Martinez, "change the personnel."

The ambiance in the high school reflects Andersen's democratic, "no caste" philosophy:

I try to break down barriers and create an environment where everyone is welcome.... We all eat together. There are no teachers' desks in classrooms, no teachers' lounge. Students and teachers have access to the same computers and telephones. Everything that is available to staff is available to students.

There are no individual student desks, but rather tables, which encourage teamwork and communication among the diverse student body. Faculty do not lecture but run highly interactive classrooms. "All the students coming here at one time or another have been alienated or disenfranchised from countries or high schools," said Andersen. "Although the students are so different from each other, they see no differences." Andersen operates under the assumption that students' past failures have been due to problems with how they were treated in their former schools. "There's nothing wrong with these kids," said Andersen. "The problem is the way they are treated in institutions. It's not the kids; it's how the kids are treated that elicits the bad response." Said veteran Horizonte instructor, Katie Chappell "The philosophy of the school is really great—the whole idea that students can come and get a second chance after people have given up on them is really amazing."

Andersen's dream is to level the playing field for his students:

In regular schools, you have 16 students in an AP [Advance Placement] class; in basic education classes you have many more. Activities at the regular high schools don't support inclusion. District school boundaries are set up so that inner city kids have the greatest distances to travel. As a result, many can't participate in afterschool activities. Regular schools emphasize prerequisites designed to maximize exclusion, such as requir-

ing members of the a capella choir to be able to read music.

At Horizonte, such barriers overcome. The sole goal of teaching is student success. According to one student, “Teachers tell you what they want you to know and why that’s important. At other high schools, you have to guess what’s going to be on the test.” Horizonte’s tests are clearly aligned with the curriculum. The school has clear expectations and tells students why they need to learn specific concepts. Each student is tracked daily and if absent is called individually. Major infractions, such as drug use or assaults, are referred to the local authorities. There is zero tolerance for gang activity or drugs. Horizonte has no bells marking passing time from class to class; when students hear music broadcast throughout the school, they are reminded it is time to change classes. In general, students are treated as responsible adults who are willing to work hard to be successful in school and beyond.

Horizonte’s focus is on developing student leadership (there is little emphasis on organized sports); creating a community of caring by enforcing the values of respect for community, family, and self; developing social skills through peer mediation; and learning through integrated, project-based curricula including service-learning projects. According to Susan McFarland, lead teacher at the main Horizonte site, “Everything is part of the curriculum and counts toward graduation.”

Horizonte heads off likely dropouts by providing an alternative educational environment for 7th and 8th grade students who are not succeeding in traditional classrooms. Referred by their home schools, these future Horizonte high school students study in smaller, structured, and more individualized classes at four middle school sites or in one of the city’s Boys and Girls Club sites.

Empirical data from Horizonte’s School Improvement Plan and the Salt Lake City School District show significant gains in test scores by students who attend Horizonte for six months or more. Disaggregated data from the Utah Basic Skills Competency Test scores for 10th and 11th grade students show Latino students at Horizonte outperforming Latino students at the District’s other, traditional, high schools.

A follow-up of SY 1994-1995 found 76% of the main campus’s graduates working and 21% enrolled in postsecondary education. Ninety percent of stu-

dents passed the District’s language arts competency tests.

Adult High School

To serve a community with numerous disadvantaged and undereducated, foreign-born adults, many of whom had little formal education in their countries of birth, Horizonte operates a year-round Adult High School. This is an open-entry/open-exit model that helps about 7,000 adults complete the GED, earn a high school diploma, or significantly raise their literacy levels. Horizonte’s main center and six other sites, including those at Odyssey House, Indian Alcohol Recovery Center, Salvation Army, and in rooms at elementary and intermediate schools offer an impressive array of day and evening adult education courses, academic, technical/vocational, and cultural.

After assessing the student’s skills and prior credits, an appropriate placement level is suggested. According to Horizonte records, adults achieved a gain of 1,837 literacy levels last year in adult basic education and English as a Second Language. On occasion, a group of employees from a particular firm come to the Center for specific on-site training needed by the employer. As in the Alternative High School, child care for infants through preschoolers is provided to adult students on a space-available basis.

Among the evening courses available, all designed to enhance basic skills and complete high school diploma requirements, are ABE Reading and English, US and World History, English, Humanities, Physical and Biological Science, Mathematics, Occupational Business Education, as well as test preparation for the GED and Driver Education. Modest registration fees of \$20 per six-week session are levied for these evening courses.

Horizonte has established outreach communication efforts with local government agencies, corporations, and community-based organizations. With these local partners, Horizonte provides resource fairs, seminars, and forums on essential topics, including employment, health care, housing, banking/financing, immigration, public safety, foster family care, dispute resolution, library and literacy support services, and continued educational opportunities at the University of Utah, Salt Lake Community College, Eagle Gate College, as well as different divisions of the armed forces. In addition, Horizonte has a long-term partnership with the Utah Food Bank to provide meals to evening students and their children

at the Kids' Kafe, and to provide a monthly food drop to more than 1,600 individuals and 300 families in the community.

The Adult High School supplements public school and state funding with a variety of federal Adult Family and Literacy Act, ESL and Workforce Investment Act grants.

English as a Second Language Program for Immigrants and Refugees

Salt Lake City is home to between 30,000 and 50,000 new immigrants and refugees. Thus, much of Horizonte's work focuses on intensive instruction for survival and pre-employment. Horizonte offers English language learners 10 levels of instruction ranging from preliteracy to postsecondary instruction, including Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) training. Class size averages 27 students with instruction supplemented by college student tutors and other volunteers. Students range from 18-87 years of age, come from 88 countries, and speak at least 82 languages. Some 3,800 students study in the day and evening programs. American citizens and resident aliens pay fees of \$20 for each 36-day session. The US Office of Refugee Resettlement and the Utah Department of Workforce Services pay the students' fees.



*Horizonte students of all ages and ethnicities learn together.
(Photo courtesy of Horizonte Instruction and Training Center)*

With the help of the Utah State Department of Workforce Services, Horizonte offers courses, career fairs, and career counseling, thus linking education with employment goals. Upper-level students are also able to take courses in trades such as computer repair, travel services, construction, and welding as they continue to progress toward high school completion.

Young Parent Program

Recognizing the special needs of students who are young parents or pregnant teens, Horizonte aims to help them complete high school in an adult setting, as well as to develop academic and vocational skills and parenting skills. About 80 students at any time are served by Young Parent Program (YPP), which also cares for some 60 young children in the on-site Child Care Center for students who bring their children to school. Altogether, the Center accommodates about 100 children in two Head Start classrooms and four Horizonte classrooms. Services are also provided by the Salt Lake School District's Department of Student and Family Services, the University of Utah Teen Mother and Children's Center, and the Children's Center, a private, nonprofit behavioral therapy unit for the treatment of emotionally disturbed pre-school children and their families. Funding for these services comes from a city tax levy, the Department of Work Force Services, and student fees.

Technology Center

Horizonte is located near the Salt Lake School District's Applied Technology Center, thus enabling students to enroll in additional classes: building construction, building maintenance and repair, business occupations, child development and occupational child care (on site), culinary arts (on site), health occupations, horticulture, metalwork, computer repair, and electronics.

Information technology is quite advanced at Horizonte; the Center boasts three of the most advanced computer labs in the state. All classrooms have access to the Internet, cable television, CD-ROM technology. ESL students are introduced early on to these resources and a wide range of hardware and software.

Horizonte recognizes that support services are essential. Bus tokens are given to high schoolers who need them. Day care is available on a limited basis, as is free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch.

The Horizonte Student Scholarship Endowment attempts to award \$500 scholarships to its graduates. Last year, however, due to insufficient endowment income, only 26 of the 70 eligible applicants received grants.

Funding

Horizonte operates on an annual budget of approximately \$5.5 million, about half of which comes from the Salt Lake School District for education of high-school-age youth (based on \$3,800 per student). Adult programs are funded by the state (\$1.7 million) from federal acts dealing with basic education, family literacy, workforce development, and neglected and delinquent youth. Head Start supports major portions of the infant and childcare program. Despite the large emphasis that Horizonte places on career and technical education, only limited funding for a career coordinator/teacher position and about \$12,000 a year for equipment and supplies is received from the federal Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act.

Impact

Horizonte's cumulative impact on Salt Lake City is immense. Literally tens of thousands of adults have been or are being enabled to take their place in society as better workers, more effective parents, and proud new Americans. Academically, the Horizonte team has shown that its student body can perform as well as those in more advantaged communities.

Former Salt Lake City School Board member John Florez said public schools are too quick to refer minority students to alternative schools because they expect minority children to be incapable of learning at high levels. "At Horizonte, the bar is set high, and students are expected to reach it. They know the students as persons. What Andersen has done can be replicated in every school if they wish to do it," Florez said.

Asked what he is proudest of in his leadership, Principal Andersen answered that Horizonte's example is having a positive impact on the traditional high schools in Salt Lake City. These schools now see tangible proof that economically-challenged youth and adults can profit immensely from educational offerings that are demanding, yet flexible and learner-centered.

Horizonte (like public schools in Jefferson County (Louisville), Kentucky, Portland, Oregon, Austin,

Texas, and Trenton, New Jersey, see Chapters 2, 5, 3 and 7, respectively) demonstrates that public school districts are fully capable of reaching, teaching, and reconnecting most of America's disconnected youth. It is a matter of will, public leadership, and public commitment to help this population. Schools and districts like these deserve far greater respect, recognition, and public financial support for their efforts to reengage out-of-school youth and bring them into society's mainstream.

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Other References

Jobs for the Future, Boston, MA, also profiles Horizonte in its *From the Margins to the Mainstream* project: <http://www.jff.org/Margins/Growing/ExpansionProfiles/Horizonte.html>. Also see JFF's case study "Effective Practices for Teaching Workplace Essential Skills," December 10, 1999.

CHAPTER 5

Portland, Oregon

- *Public school system and community-based organizations collaborating to provide creative educational options for out-of-school youth*
- *Solid support for innovation embedded in state legislation*
- *Postsecondary opportunities for out-of-school youth*

By most criteria, Portland, Oregon, is a city blessed. A pioneer in urban planning and development with a population of 538,544 (2003 US Census estimate), it enjoys the natural pleasures of the Willamette Valley---a generally strong economy and a fast-growing reputation, not unlike Seattle's to the north---as a magnet for new, usually middle-class residents.

Portland Public Schools (PPS) often receives praise for the variety and quality of its offerings for potential and actual dropouts. Unlike many urban school systems, PPS is explicitly charged with responsibility for recovering its out-of-school youth. To meet this statutory requirement, it created a broad array of programs of its own and works closely with community-based organizations and Portland Community College to offer unconventional educational options to retain and reconnect at-risk and out-of-school youth. This focused strategy of dealing directly with a population that most districts all but ignore also helps increase the number of students graduating from the Portland's high schools.

The legal origins of Portland's wide-ranging push to recover its dropouts stem from a widely respected Oregon state law stipulating that state residents have a right to a publicly-funded education until they receive a high school diploma or reach age 21 by the start of a school year. Recognizing the value of innovative and flexible ways of educating children and youth, Oregon school districts may establish alternative educational options within their systems or contract with qualified private providers. Such programs, whether district- or privately-run, must meet the state's common curriculum goals, academic content, and state testing requirements. Districts that enroll students in private alternative education programs receive full state funding for each student. In practice, the state thus allows local school districts to contract out services for any student who would do better in

an alternative setting. In other words, state education funds follow the students as they move in and out of school districts or community-based organization-run schools. The district receives 100% of the state's per student aid and contracts with an alternative education provider, whom it pays for actual program costs or 80% of the district's per pupil expenditure, whichever is lower. Portland's out-of-school youth thus have a range of state-backed options for returning to education and/or employment training.

State education funds follow students as they move in and out of school districts or community-based organization-run schools.

The state requires that a district notify a student of the availability of alternative education programs when he or she has an erratic attendance record, has had two severe disciplinary problems within a three-year period, is being considered for expulsion, drops out or withdraws from public school, or has failed to meet or exceed all of the state standards at Grades 3, 5, 8, and 10.

Portland Public Schools Educational Options

In backing up its commitments, PPS offers choices such as school-within-school programs in high schools, night schools, and programs in their own locations. Alternative offerings include specialized programs targeting primarily at-risk youth, out-of-school youth, homeless students, teen parents, teens with drug and alcohol problems, and teens returning from the juvenile justice system.

Within-District Dropout Recovery

Through its Office of Alternative Education Options, PPS offers several in-district programs to reconnect out-of-school youth to education. These include:

- **Portland Evening High School (PEHS)**, serving 1,300 students per year, gives students a second chance to meet graduation requirements by complementing the day school program for students enrolled in a regular high school. By increasing time in class, a student is able to make up for having fallen behind in credits. Students enrolled in PEHS receive their diploma from their home high school.
- **Portland Night High School (PNHS)** provides students who must work during the day an opportunity to complete their high school education and receive a standard diploma. This school's student population is 115 at any given time. To be eligible, students must be employed in a job for at least 16 hours per week or be parenting. The Night School provides instruction leading to a standard diploma and skill instruction and training for students to complete their secondary school education by meeting GED requirements. Diplomas are awarded by Grant High School, which houses the PNHS.
- **Marshall Night School** is open to any student in the district who is unable to attend day school and to those not currently enrolled in a regular school program. Its instructional program assists students with poor attendance records to complete their secondary school education. The school is organized to reach discontinuous learners and entice them back into the educational mainstream. Students are counseled into three possibilities: earning high school credits toward a diploma, preparing for General Educational Development (GED in conjunction with taking post-GED classes at a community college), and concurrently working on obtaining their high school diplomas while taking college classes. Marshall serves about 120 students each year. Credit is based on either seat time or demonstrated competency.

Contracting with Community-Based Schools for Dropout Recovery

In addition to alternative education programs run directly by PPS, the well-respected PPS Office of Educational Options contracts with community-based organizations (CBOs) to offer education programs to youth who have left or are at great risk of leav-

ing school. The programs these organizations offer are an integral part of the District's commitment to re-engaging youth who have dropped out. In SY 2003-2004, PPS contracted with 16 different CBOs to educate 2,232 high school students in 19 alternative programs. About five percent of the PPS budget, or \$8.5 million per year, is spent on contracting with such programs.

These 16 organizations comprise the unique Coalition of Metro Area Community-based Schools (C-MACS), a loose but highly effective coalition of CBOs working with PPS to make a comprehensive education system accessible to all students. In addition to running their own schools, many of these community-based youth-serving organizations cooperate closely with nearby public schools. Portland Public Schools views the C-MACS organizations as partners in the city's mission to educate all children—a strong indicator of the extent to which the city's school leaders are prepared to enter into nominally unconventional arrangements to offer attractive choices to its actual and potential dropouts.

The product of this collaboration is a system offering attractive, learner-focused options for students, with programs and paths to meet their varied needs. The 19 programs offered by C-MACS range in size from one with 10 students to another that serves 754 students annually. Located throughout Portland, they include drop-in, GED, small diploma-granting, and community college programs. They also provide specialized services for homeless youth, teen parents, recent immigrants and English language learners. All share a mission to reengage young people, and all embody Portland's approach of responsibility for all young people. Representative of CBO alternative programs offered in Portland are:

- **LISTOS Alternative Learning Center**, a program of the Oregon Council for Hispanic Advancement, retrieves youth who have dropped out of high school and brings them back into an educational community, providing a bilingual/bicultural educational program targeted at nearly 200 Limited English Proficient (LEP) and non-LEP students each year.
- **New Avenues for Youth Alternative Education Center** offers positive educational experiences for about 130 homeless and runaway 12-22-year-olds annually in a structured, supportive, and safe short-term educational setting. Academic and emotional growth are balanced and students

are prepared and motivated to become contributing members of the larger community. Once the immediate emergency of their homelessness is addressed, New Avenues students are counseled into appropriate longer-term educational programs.

- **Open Meadow Alternative Schools (OM)**, founded in 1971, serves 700 students each year in programs including Open Meadow Middle School, OM High School, OM Corps Restoring the Urban Environment (CRUE), Youth Opportunity (YO), and STEP UP. Its varied menu includes tutoring, leadership development, school-to-work transition, specialized counseling groups, and advocacy groups that offer peer support under the guidance of a teacher/advocate. (These approaches are discussed in greater detail below.)
- **Pathfinder Academy**, an evening high school, serves about 35 teen parents every year by providing individualized academic plans, peer support groups, and support in the often stressful transition to community college or professional training. Credit retrieval is also an option for students desiring to return to regular high schools. On-site licensed childcare is provided for children from birth to age 2, with parents interacting with their children every day in the childcare room.
- **Portland Community College (PCC)**, a major partner in the city's dropout recovery effort, offers high school programs bridging secondary and postsecondary education for at-risk youth ages 16-21 at four sites. Its Prep Alternative Programs serve nearly 1,300 students annually through **Youth Empowered to Succeed!**, supplying GED preparation, life skills, and college transitional services; **Multicultural Academic Program**, with a curriculum featuring English language literacy, GED preparation and high school transition for limited English proficient students, and **Gateway to College**, offering 345 students per year the prospect of completing high school while concurrently gaining college credit.
- **Portland YouthBuilders** is based on the national YouthBuild model. (See Chapter 17.) Each year, about 70 previously out-of-school young people participate in this comprehensive development program, which embraces academics, leadership development, and vocational training, a feature that has attracted much favorable comment from students. While they work to obtain a high school diploma or GED, YouthBuild students acquire in-

valuable skills in building trades and job readiness through hands-on experience building affordable housing in low-income communities. The curriculum fuses classroom instruction with experiential learning and skill development at actual housing construction sites. Program counselors teach job readiness and life skills and provide individualized support to students in stabilizing their lives and developing viable long-term educational and career goals. In this open-enrollment program, which engages students in 6 to 18 months of active, on-site participation, participants spend alternating weeks in the classroom and at construction sites learning with experienced construction trainers.

- **Youth Employment Institute (YEI)**, a state-registered alternative high school since 1985, is an open-entry/open-exit program dedicated to promoting self-sufficiency and life-long learning by nurturing the personal, educational, and career development of young people, especially those with multiple barriers to success in school and employment. Its Out-of-School Program provides GED completion and testing services as well as pre-employment training to youth ages 16-21 who have dropped out. The program offers vital, on-site supportive services that include child care, nutrition classes, parenting classes, alcohol and drug counseling, tutoring, life skills, and on-site support from Adult and Family Services and Probation and Parole.

In consultation with the C-MACS organizations, PPS established an evaluation component for CBO-run programs that specifies annual performance objectives which, over time, have in effect become school improvement plans for all CBO-directed alternative programs in the city. Since 1999 C-MACS member programs contracting with PPS have been evaluated annually by the federally-funded Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NREL). This evaluation has raised the rigor of the programs while student achievement has also risen dramatically among those who complete these alternative programs. According to the annual NREL evaluation, the attendance rate for students in the CBO alternative programs in SY 2003-2004 was 86%, with 80% judged to have experienced "positive outcomes," such as gains in skills, graduation, GED attainment, employment, transition to public high school, or continued involvement in an alternative program.

Of the 2,232 students enrolled in CBO alternative programs during SY 2003-2004, about 15% (332) who had been enrolled in a PPS high school on October 1 left that school and later in the school year enrolled in a CBO alternative program. Of these, 289 stayed in PPS through their participation in CBO alternative programs and only 43 (fewer than 13%) dropped out during the school year. Eight-five percent of the students served by the CBO alternative programs in SY 2003-2004 had not been enrolled in a PPS high school on October 1. These out-of-school youth were brought back into the District through their enrollment in a CBO alternative program, thereby increasing the total number of high school students served by a resounding 14% to 15,379.

The links between Portland Public Schools and the CBOs extend to areas other than dropout reconnection. For example, Open Meadow Alternative Schools and Roosevelt High School have developed an orientation program for entering 9th-grade students believed most at risk of dropping out. Open Meadow is the Supplemental Services Provider to Roosevelt under the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). Portland Community College works with all PPS high schools to connect to postsecondary education through programming in those schools. While in many other states similar alternative education programs have opened charter schools, in Portland, where the CBO programs are already in place as part of the city's long-standing readiness to act, charter schools may be a less attractive choice.

Funds Follow the Student

The ties between PPS and C-MACS providers are abetted by insightful state legislation that allows State School Funds (SSF) to follow the student. Portland Public Schools receives SSF based on funding formulas for each student's full- or part-time attendance. When a student chooses an alternative program, PPS contracts with the CBO on an annual basis, paying 80% of the District's per pupil net operating expenditure. In SY 2005-2006 payment under the contract negotiated by C-MACS programs with PPS amounts to about \$35.00 per pupil per day for a full-day program. PPS retains the remaining portion of state education funds to cover administrative costs, including those for program evaluation, data collection, and staff development. And the process works.

CBO-run alternative programs broaden the choices for youth in Portland and leverage the community's education resources.

One of the outstanding effects of C-MACS programs engaged in dropout recovery is the increased revenue to PPS by re-engaging young people who had left the school system. At the same time, CBO-run alternative programs broaden the choices for youth in Portland and leverage the community's education resources. The 2004 evaluation by NREL of CBO alternative programs reported that every dollar paid to C-MACS-run programs by the District (i.e., the state and local pass-through funds) is matched by a dollar in other funding, including private foundations, other private contributions, and public funds. Observers of the often esoteric universe of public school funding structures will appreciate the collaborative spirit behind such an arrangement.

Open Meadow Alternative Schools: Nationally-Recognized Programs Contracted by Portland Public Schools

Open Meadow Alternative Schools (OM) is one of Portland's—and the nation's—oldest alternative education providers. OM emphasizes educating youth in small, relationship-based programs that stress personal responsibility, academic achievement, and service to the community. OM serves youth ages 10-21 in three school programs and three youth transition programs: Open Meadow Middle School, serving 90 students in Grades 6-8 with special attention paid to students dropping out of school by the 9th grade; Open Meadow High School, with 150 students in Grades 9-12 who earn credits toward a high school diploma; Corps Restoring the Urban Environment (CRUE), a high school program for 30 16-21 year-old students based on a conservation corps model; STEP UP, a partnership between OM and Roosevelt High School, George Middle School, and Portsmouth Middle School that provides tutoring and support to 300 students in need of extra academic assistance; YO! (Youth Opportunity) Program for roughly 80 youth ages 14-21 residing in Portland's North and Northeast Enterprise Zones that offers education,

employment, and youth development services; and Corporate Connections, which provides 20 high school graduates a 12-week work experience and internship program through partnerships with eight area corporations.

OM Program Structure

Accredited by the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools and Colleges, Open Meadow is registered as a private school with the Oregon Department of Education. Its alternative programs serve about 700 students annually in North and Northeast Portland, where it cultivates self-directed learners who are responsible for themselves and the environment. With a staff-to-student ratio of 1:8 and classes of no more than 12, students enjoy close relationships with their teacher-advisors and peers. In consultation with their teacher-advisors, students develop a personal academic plan, an important step in gaining the eventual autonomy of citizens of a modern democracy. “It’s about community and building small learning communities,” said former OM Executive Director Carole Smith. For this sensible reason, OM has chosen to keep its component programs small.

A community strengthened and enriched by young people with a vision for their future, a love of life-long learning, and an ethic of contribution to the community.

—from Open Meadow Vision Statement

Aligned with state and local standards, Open Meadow High School’s curriculum is augmented by project-based learning activities and community service and accommodates a variety of learning styles and student needs. Students take an average of two-and-one-half years to graduate and earn high school credit in a variety of ways. They may demonstrate competency or mastery by passing exams, presenting work samples, providing documentation of prior learning experiences, and showing classroom or equivalent work, such as career-related learning experiences or supervised independent study.

The CRUE high school program, a partner-

ship between OM and the Wetlands Conservancy, enrolls students ages 16-21 in a crew specializing in integrated marketing and communications, natural resources, or human services for field-based learning and community service projects. The mostly hands-on curriculum emphasizes a positive work ethic and marketable job skills while using community project sites as classrooms. Participants are expected to complete project work for external project sponsors two days per week in crews of eight.

OM’s Youth Transition Programs provide a variety of services ranging from academic tutoring to hands-on preparation for employment. The OM STEP UP program attempts to improve retention at nearby Roosevelt High School through year-round Supplemental Educational Services and personal development opportunities for students at Roosevelt and its feeder middle schools. Open Meadow is one of eight Portland organizations cooperating to provide education, employment, and youth development services to young people ages 14-21 residing in Portland’s North and Northeast Enterprise Community. Although funding for the federal Youth Opportunity program expired in FY 2005, OM plans to continue its YO! program, though at a significantly scaled-back level for at least one year, with limited follow-up and retention services for youth in long-term placements. (See discussion of the Youth Opportunity Program in Chapter 19.) Open Meadow’s Corporate Connections program continues to offer high school graduates much-needed employment training and 12-week internships with area companies. Upon completion, students are eligible to apply on a priority basis for career-track jobs with the partner corporations.

The faculty makes an art form of encouraging the kids to do everything they can do. They have a sense of humor that kids absolutely need. I think it’s very empowering, what you see happening here at Open Meadow.”

—Rob Hertert, parent of 2005 Open Meadow graduate



Open Meadows Corporate Connections class in front of The Standard Insurance Company, one of OM's corporate partners. (Photo courtesy of Open Meadow Alternative Schools)

"Without Open Meadow," said OM Executive Director Andrew Mason, "Many of these students would not complete high school. We are currently learning a whole lot about what it takes to get a disengaged population, not just through high school, but placed and retained successfully in a postsecondary experience that will feed our students' futures." Mason notes that OM students enter with an average attendance rate of only 40% and that most are the first in their families to graduate from high school. Attending college thus becomes a big deal. Open Meadow is proud of the fact that many of its students attend college when they graduate and go on to relatively well-paying corporate positions. Of OM's 2005 graduates, 58% attended college prior to graduating from high school. But getting students to this level and retaining them are two very different activities, and Open Meadow is actively developing effective ways to retain postsecondary students.

The relationship with Portland Public Schools allows OM to support the local public schools in two ways: within their programs as a supplemental service provider and as a safety net to catch youth who leave the public system. Beyond these excellent features, there are noteworthy yet underappreciated sides to the PPS-OM connection. One that stands out is the high level of respect each body has developed for the other. In recent years, this has even extended to the movement of the Executive Director of OM to a senior administrative position in PPS.

OM Student Population

Students come to OM when other educational settings have proved unsuccessful. A full 84% of OM students had previously dropped out of school. Admission is by interview, with new admissions taking place every six weeks. Open Meadow serves youth who meet PPS requirements for placement in an alternative education setting, meaning that all are either former dropouts or students at substantial risk of dropping out. In SY 2003-2004, 563 students were enrolled in OM programs, of whom 45% were White, 31% African American, 11% Hispanic, 5% Asian American, 5% Native American, 2% "other," and 1% Pacific Islander. Seventy percent of OM students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch.

Students Describe Open Meadow

"I have done more work here than I ever did in public school. I have teachers that show they care about my future. Everyone gets along and knows one another. I finally understand math.... I learned a lot from this experience even though it was challenging and hard at times. I learned that no matter how hard something is, if you want it badly enough, if you don't give up, the outcomes are awesome."

—2005 graduate Nicole Nickila, age 18

"At Open Meadow I stepped outside of my box a lot. I learned that just because you don't like something, you can't quit it. If you do that you are being a failure to yourself."

—2005 graduate LaTiah Kristensen, age 18

Funding

Like other C-MACS alternative education providers in Portland, OM Alternative Programs are funded primarily by PPS, which pays OM a per-student fee based on average daily membership (ADM), currently about \$35.00 per day. To meet the actual costs of educating its students, OM leverages these public education funds to get support elsewhere, including government funding sources such as No Child Left Behind Supplemental Educational Services for the STEP UP program, Oregon Youth Conserva-

tion Corps funding, the Multnomah County-funded Youth Empowerment and Employment Project, and the City of Portland Bureau of Housing and Community Development. In addition, OM raises about 20% of its budget from private sources, such as foundations, business sponsors, and individual donors.

Evaluation and Recognition

According to its contract with PPS, OM must maintain full enrollment throughout the school year, which is no problem for a school that turns away five applicants for every one enrolled. Open Meadow is a winner of the National Youth Employment Coalition PEP-Net (Promising and Effective Practices Network) Award and has received numerous local awards. In SY 2004-2005 its attendance rates were an astonishing 92% for the Middle School, 93% for the High School, and 94% for the CRUE program. Open Meadow does not track graduation rates because its students do not necessarily stay in its program for their entire high school experience. Many students get back on track at OM and return to the PPS system. But OM does compile its own program data and reports dropout rates for the SY 2004-2005 at 3%, 7%, and 9%, respectively, for the Middle School, High School, and CRUE programs.

Portland Community College: Linkages to Postsecondary Education for Out-of-School Youth

Unsurprisingly, Portland Community College (PCC) is Oregon's largest community college. What does surprise, though, is that via agreements with area public schools and second-chance providers it is also the largest high school in the state. It operates PCC Prep Alternative programs in arrangements with six local school districts and connects with all local districts and high schools in the area, including community-based education programs. PCC offers a continuum of services to help out-of-school youth return to education, achieve academic success, and move on to postsecondary learning, thereby providing out-of-school youth with a variety of re-entry points. By some mostly academic criteria, this would appear to challenge the conventional, if outdated, wisdom about community colleges---that their primary functions are to prepare students for four-year colleges and skilled occupations.



Proud Open Meadow graduate Chassidy Burrell. (Photo courtesy of Open Meadow Alternative Schools)

Gateway to College

PCC's Gateway to College program serves out-of-school youth or students considering dropping out of their traditional high schools by offering them a second chance to earn a high school diploma and substantial credits toward an associate's degree. Between 2000 and 2004, Gateway served 740 16-21 year-old students on four PCC campuses. A nationally-recognized education model serving former out-of-school youth, Gateway to College challenges deep-seated myths about dropouts. The program's central premise is that students' previous failure in high school was probably not due to lack of academic ability. Instead, it may have stemmed from one or more of such factors as challenges in motivation, social relationships, study skills, family issues, lack of self-esteem or trust, or adjustment to a new language and educational system. Gateway assumes that such students can do college work, and its rigorous program offers students the opportunity to complete high school and an associate's degree or significant college credit, all on a community college campus.

Gateway...offers students the opportunity to complete high school and an associate's degree or significant college credit, all on a community college campus.

The Gateway to College experience may last up to three years and begins with precollege coursework for one or two terms to cover basic academic skills. During this initial period, called the “cohort term” because students study in cohort groups of 20 to 25, students have classes to strengthen academic skills, reinforce positive learning behaviors, and prepare them for success in an adult learning environment. Students engage in 15 hours per week of intensive college preparatory instruction, including reading, writing, math, and counseling and guidance classes, as well as an academic lab. Counseling and guidance classes orient students to the college campus, study skills, time management, test taking, and career exploration. Classes are held four days per week for three hours each day, either mornings or evenings. A required academic lab (tutoring and study skills) is held on a fifth day. Students must pass all cohort term classes with a grade of C or better to qualify for regular college coursework. Those failing to pass all cohort term classes may be allowed to repeat individual classes the following term.

Students who successfully complete the first term begin taking PCC courses with the general community college student population under the guidance of their assigned student resource specialist/academic advisor. They choose career majors or “pathways” that align high school completion requirements with college degree or certificate requirements. Students

also take college classes for dual high school and college credit. For the first term after successfully completing the cohort term, they continue the cohort experience with classes in study skills and career development. In subsequent terms, they continue taking courses in their pathway; to maintain good standing they must pass all courses with a grade of C or better. Students who do not meet the standards are placed on a “success contract,” a plan to address the barriers to success and provide supports for coping with or overcoming them. Students spend three to five terms completing core subject requirements and then another three to five terms on advanced coursework to complete their designated pathway-specific requirements. The length of time it takes for a student to complete his/her high school diploma depends on the number of high school credits they received upon entering the program and the number of classes per term in which he or she enrolls. Resource specialists continue to provide intensive academic and personal counseling to students throughout their time in the program.

Students complete the Gateway program by fulfilling the requirements for the high school diploma. In addition, a student will have completed a significant number of college credits toward an associate’s degree. All diplomas and degrees are awarded by Portland Community College. Gateway graduates continue at Portland Community College, move on to a four-year college, or enter careers.



*Gateway to College students with their Resource Specialist.
(Photo courtesy of PCC Alternative Programs/PCC Prep)*

Students Describe Gateway to College at Portland Community College

“Focusing on my peers...has always been a big problem for me. I love how college people tend to focus on academics instead of socialization.”

“This program is so different from high school. I feel challenged academically and that is something I haven’t felt in a long time.”

“I used to detest waking up in the morning and heading off to school. Classes were filled with lazy birds that didn’t want to be there, and soon I turned into one of those birds. Since coming to this program, I enjoy coming to classes. People I talk to want to succeed.”

Youth Empowered to Succeed! and Multicultural Academic Program

Portland Community College provides several re-entry points for out-of-school youth and emphasizes the importance of proper placement of students based on their academic level. Students reading at a minimum 8th-grade level are eligible to enter the dual-credit Gateway to College Program directly. Older students with fewer credits (for whom a diploma by age 21 is not possible) are guided to Youth Empowered to Succeed! (YES!), a GED preparation program that may lead to college courses. Those coming to PCC with limited English proficiency are referred to the Multicultural Academic Program (MAP), which is designed for English language learners and includes materials from courses in English proficiency as well as bilingual support for students from 20 different language groups. Like Gateway to College, the YES! and MAP programs include intensive counseling and support from resource specialists. Students are encouraged to view completion of the YES! or MAP program as a first step, with Gateway to College as the next step toward employment or continuing education, either through Gateway or on their own.

Student Population

To be eligible for a PCC Prep program, a student must be 16-20 years old, have too few high school credits for age and grade level, have a GPA of 2.0 or below, live in a participating school district, and desire to earn a high school diploma. Students fitting this profile, but with a reading level lower than 8th grade, enter the PCC YES! or MAP programs. The average age of Gateway students is 17.8 years, with an average high school GPA of 1.7 and only 7.3 completed credits. The student population is two-thirds White; students of color make up the remainder.

The YES! program population is evenly divided by gender and is 63% White (primarily Russian and East European immigrants), 11% African American, 6% Asian, 9% Hispanic, 3% Native American, and 9% unspecified. Of the MAP participants, two-thirds are male with 67% Hispanic, 22% White, 9% Asian, and 2% African.

Effectiveness and Replication of the Gateway Model

Gateway to College's dropout recovery record is exemplary, and PCC is proud of the achievements of its

students. Across 52 cohorts (933 students), Gateway has an amazing 92% attendance rate, with 70% of students successfully completing all cohort classes and 75% successfully completing the first term on the comprehensive campus. Of those enrolled in Gateway between June 2000 and June 2005, 84 received high school diplomas (31 in the SY 2004-2005), and 21 also received an associate's degree as well. Fourteen percent graduated with honors, and 88% were on the honors list at least once during their enrollment. Of students exiting the Gateway program, 73% of high school diploma recipients, 63% of students who obtained a GED instead of a diploma, and 38% of the students who exited without a credential continued their educations. Upon graduation, Gateway high school diploma recipients had earned an average of 73 college credits.

Administrators, teachers, and resource specialists attribute Gateway's success to the strong support of the college, high academic expectations of students, individualized support and instruction provided by teams of specialized adults, smaller learning communities created by the cohort system, and the career pathway system, which links to community college majors.

"Students who did not thrive in a traditional high school setting are earning their high school diplomas while making significant progress toward a college degree and a bright future."

—Linda Huddle, Director of PCC Alternative Programs

Clearly, the Gateway to College program works with students who have achieved little success in the K-12 system, which marks the achievements of PCC as quite impressive. "Students who did not thrive in a traditional high school setting," marvels Linda Huddle, Director of Alternative Programs at PCC, "Are earning their high school diplomas while making significant progress toward a college degree and a bright future."

As a national partner in the Early College High School Initiative (funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, along with Carnegie Corporation

of New York, The Ford Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation), Portland Community College is replicating Gateway to College in 17 US sites. It is now operating at Montgomery College in Rockville, Maryland; Riverside Community College in Riverside, California; Palo Alto College in San Antonio, Texas; Georgia Perimeter College in Decatur, Georgia; and Clackamas Community College in Oregon City, Oregon.

Lessons from Portland

Starting and running a viable, multifaceted dropout recovery effort in Portland doubtless yielded a sizable number of the political and bureaucratic hassles that come with the territory. But unlike those in many other jurisdictions, Portland's leaders did not—and decades later still do not—consider reclaiming early school-leavers to be a policy afterthought, add-on, or extraneous administrative chore. Instead, they are beating the odds with a formidable combination of statutory legislative backing from the state and dedicated cooperation from the school district (where it is housed), local community college, and nongovernmental community organizations. The result is a set of creatively designed, specialized dropout recovery programs thoroughly attuned to the needs of their participants (who are strongly encouraged to speak their piece about the programs) and firmly embedded in the daily operations of the participating agencies and organizations.

The “Portland model” has enjoyed strong leadership from the start., especially in creating the groundbreaking and risk-taking links among governmental and private entities that typify this enterprise. Once firmly established, these ties—buttressed by a lot of ingenuity and genuinely hard work by everyone involved—have led to extremely positive results. The experience of dealing with dropout recovery in Portland is unique among urban communities around the country, and it merits a hard look from those bedeviled by the many sides of what remains a worrisome national problem.

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Other Portland References

The National Youth Employment Coalition has published a profile of Open Meadow Alternative Schools with a detailed description of its funding strategies. See *Financing Alternative Education Pathways: Profile and Policy* (NYEC, October, 2005): www.nyec.org/EdStrategies.html

In collaboration with the Youth Transition Funders Group, Jobs for the Future is working to strengthen district-wide strategies in Portland to ensure the most vulnerable youth have a chance to graduate ready for college and careers. See *Early Lessons from the Strategic Assessment Initiative of the Youth Transitions Funders Group* (Jobs for the Future, 2005): <http://www.jff.org/jff/PDFDocuments/EarlyLessonsYTTFG.pdf>

CHAPTER 6

Oakland, California

- *Two well-established nonprofit organizations, two approaches to reconnecting out-of-school youth in a poverty-stricken city*

According to researchers at Harvard University's Civil Rights Project and the Urban Institute's Education Policy Center, Oakland's high schools are "dropout factories," and the city's official graduation rate of 66.2% is a sham. Of every 100 students who enter the 9th grade, only 48 graduate. Oakland's graduation rate is sharply lower than that of other large Bay Area districts and far below the official statewide rate of 87%. (The same researchers also maintain that California's more accurate graduation rate is not 87%, but 71%.)

Regardless of whose graduation rates are cited, the dropout issue is now a major concern in the city and state. In 2002, the Oakland Unified School District declared bankruptcy and in 2003 the state ousted Oakland's school superintendent, suspended its school board, and appointed a state school administrator. To restore fiscal solvency, the new administrator cut many spending programs, but promised to "transform the culture of Oakland's high schools." The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation chipped in, contributing \$12.6 million to help create schools of no more than 400 students each.

Jerry Brown, former Governor of California, US presidential aspirant, and Oakland's Mayor since 1998, says the dropout situation is "astounding and unconscionable. It's a crisis that's been going on for decades. Oakland is trying hard. They need money. They need leadership. It's quite daunting, and it's going to require a lot more truth-telling and honesty than has been forthcoming in recent decades."

While the media and policymakers point fingers to assess blame, two long-established, nonprofit organizations in Oakland, the East Bay Conservation Corps (EBCC) and the Youth Employment Partnership (YEP), are deeply committed to reconnecting students inadequately served in Oakland's first-chance system. While both programs exhibit considerable entrepreneurial skill and have talented and highly committed front-line staff, the EBCC

focuses primarily on education as the key to success in life, while YEP gives greater emphasis to preparation for employability. Both organizations assume that a young person's success requires an educational credential and workforce skills to obtain long-term employability, and both programs have evolved over the years to combine academics and workforce development.

East Bay Conservation Corps

The East Bay Conservation Corps (EBCC) is a multi-program, nonprofit, youth-serving educational organization. Founder and Executive Director Joanna Lennon, a nationally-recognized leader in education reform and service, said: "Our mission is based on the fundamental belief that an educated citizenry is the cornerstone of a healthy democracy. Through school and community-based programs, we prepare young people for civic participation by improving their academic skills and knowledge, increasing their sense of civic and environmental responsibility, fostering their sense of caring toward others, and building their capacity to improve their own lives."



An EBCC teacher engages students in class work.

EBCC's headquarters is in a West Oakland neighborhood burdened by poverty, underemployment, crime, low education levels, high dropout and teen pregnancy rates, and a troubled, sometimes dysfunctional, local government and public school system. West Oakland is one of the poorest neighborhoods in the Bay Area; 60% of the households earn less than \$25,000 per year and the median income is \$21,385. Forty percent of West Oakland residents report no employed members in their household, which is twice the city rate and four times the Bay Area rate. Over 50% of those ages 16 and older are not in the labor pool, and 45% of adults have not graduated from high school. Only 13% have a college education, 30% less than in Oakland as a whole and in the Bay Area.

Since opening in 1983, the EBCC has helped young people grow into responsible citizens through environmental stewardship and community service. At the same time the agency has improved the quality of public education and worked to inform public policy. A national leader in the field of service-learning*--the practice of linking standards-based academic learning with voluntary service that meets real community and environmental needs--EBCC's program model enhances students' academic, leadership, employment, and life skills, as well as their self-esteem, civic responsibility, and environmental awareness.

The EBCC began as a youth service and conservation corps in an era when California led the nation in innovation for youth development, conservation, and alternative education. (See Chapter 18 for an overview of the youth corps model.) In the intervening years, since its founding in 1983, educational philosophies evolved, and different (sometimes ephemeral) funding streams enabled the EBCC to create new entities around its flagship conservation corps to provide a continuum of educational opportunity. Today, some 3,000 East Bay children and youth, ages 5-24, are served annually through several distinct, but inter-related programs:

All EBCC program activities are infused with the philosophy of Lennon, which she calls "civitas" --the empowerment of young people to be well-educated and engaged citizens, people who make a positive difference in more than just their own lives, but in the lives of those around them.

Corpsmember Program and Charter High School

The EBCC's Corpsmember Program offers youth ages 17-24 a meaningful education through service-learning activities that focus on environmental stewardship and community service. The Corpsmember High School Level of the EBCC Charter School opened in 1996 to support Corpsmembers in earning their high school diploma or GED.

The Corpsmember Program has four parts: the Corpsmember Charter High School, its affiliated Youth Development Program, Field Operations, and the Recycling Program. The high school and youth development components offer Corpsmembers the opportunity to earn their high school diploma or GED while employed in serving their communities. The program advances skills in five key areas: academics, communication, citizenship, employability, and life skills.

The EBCC Corpsmember High School is chartered by the Oakland Unified School District. It serves approximately 350 youth, ages 17-24, who have left the traditional education system without graduating and who are residents of Alameda or Contra Costa counties. The demographic composition of the EBCC's Corpsmember Program: 75% male, 25% female; 75% African American, 16% Hispanic, 6% Asian-Pacific Islander, 2% White, and 1% Native American. Overall, EBCC serves a growing number of San Francisco Bay Area youth who face serious challenges to employability and productivity due to criminal records, early parenthood, learning disabilities, and homelessness.

The staff is amazing. People have had other careers, but wanted to be at EBCC because of the character and leadership of the organization.

—Michael Smith EBCC Director of Programs

Students come to the EBCC High School to complete their high school requirements and to earn money by working part-time on conservation projects in the community. Learning takes place both in the classroom with their teachers and in the field with their work supervisors. Corpsmembers work in the field Monday through Thursday from 7 a.m.

to 3:30 p.m. and are in academic classes from 4 to 6 p.m. four evenings per week and all day on Fridays.

The East Bay Conservation Corps High School philosophy of teaching and learning is founded on high academic performance outcomes for all students, including those with low literacy skills, and a learning culture that motivates students by applying knowledge to real-life situations. It provides multiple pathways leading to postsecondary education and career opportunities, which are all supported by the rules, organizational structure, learning activities, and curricular tools of the school. Serving a multi-challenged population, the EBCC strives to help students overcome social barriers and build assets for continued success as lifelong learners and active citizens.

The instructional strategies of the Corpsmember High School embrace research-based educational practices with a proven track record of increased student performance, specifically models cited in the 2002 report on school dropouts conducted by the US General Accounting Office (now Government Accountability Office)* which concludes that the most effective programs monitor students' daily attendance, create alternative learning environments using a supportive and personalized approach, and link academic coursework to career-related courses and workplace experience. EBCC teachers direct service-learning projects and its student-staff teams ensure that projects are both academically rigorous and applicable to Corpsmembers' lives and social problems. Research also indicates the importance of positive peer groups and EBCC fosters them through work crews of 8 to 12 led by an adult supervisor who acts as mentor, tutor, friend, and role model.

The Charter High School, however, is in a period of transition. Unhappy with the academic learning environment, Lennon decided to reorganize the school and hired a new head and new teachers better equipped to deal with EBCC's population. This is in part due to California's first exit exam, which will be a mandatory graduation requirement in June 2006. "I had to rethink the whole program," said Lennon. "This year I am streamlining the programs, adding an all-day high school program, and developing an internship workforce development program. We are planning to apply for individual charters for each level of the EBCC Charter School so we can plan and develop a replicable kindergarten through young adult model." Additionally, the EBCC recently ap-

One EBCC Experience

Sheila Campos, a member of the 2005 EBCC Corpsmember High School graduating class, is a student who beat the odds. Having entered the foster care system at the age of two, Sheila continually left home without permission in a desperate search for her natural brother, from whom she had been separated at the age of 13. She did not find him until they were both in their early 20s. By that time, her brother was serving 13 years in prison for armed robbery, and Sheila found herself unable to help him due to her own drug problems.

Sheila first came to EBCC in 1996, but lacking the motivation and desire to study and work, she quickly fell away from the program. "I came in 1996, but I didn't want to do anything and have people telling me what to do. I wanted to go out on the streets and do drugs, hang out, see men, and you can't do that here," she said. Then, in October 2003, she returned to EBCC as an unwed mother of two children, having lost custody due to drugs, but with a new resolve to succeed. Sheila graduated in June 2005 after simultaneously attending classes and working "on the grade" (field work) for two years. "If it wasn't for this place, I'd be dead. I was being killed slowly," she said.

Now free from drugs, Sheila credits her successes in large part to a caring and persistent staff. Each time her motivation flagged, one or more staff actively worked with her to rekindle it: "They were really there for me. You could feel it." Continuing into Field Operations after graduation, Sheila has been promoted to crew leader and is working hard to clear her driving record to become eligible for a field supervisor position. She also helps out in the EBCC office and is planning to enroll in Merritt College in the near future. Having personally encouraged at least five youth to apply to EBCC, she insists: "No one can make you do it. It has to come from inside. If they want to change their life, however, this would be a good place to come." After all, as Sheila points out: "Life is about moving on. It's not about staying in one spot."

plied for and received local education authority status for EBCC and will no longer have to go through the Oakland Unified School District to receive funding, but it will be able to receive payment directly from the state.

All EBCC Corpsmembers participate in a variety of field learning experiences and classroom educational opportunities while providing critically needed

community service projects in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, the two counties which comprise the East Bay. The field operations division develops and maintains fee-for-service projects that focus on conservation, vegetation management, and recycling. Examples of field operations include habitat restoration and capital improvement in parks, urban landscaping, neighborhood beautification and fire prevention with such agencies as the East Bay Regional Park District, The East Bay Municipal Utilities District, and the Oakland Fire Department. The field work is integrated into classroom work and allows young people to expand their job and leadership skills, develop personal values, ethics, and an awareness of social, political, and environmental issues while furthering their education and providing valuable services to local communities.

The Recycling Program provides Corpsmembers with additional opportunities to gain advanced job skills. This innovative program operates as a specialized service contractor with more than 150 public and private accounts in the East Bay. Corpsmembers manage all recycling operations, including the collection, sorting, and marketing of materials.

Corpsmembers who have demonstrated initiative with their crew in the Field Program and in the classroom may apply for one of two types of internship positions with the EBCC Recycling Team. Student interns manage EBCC recycling operations, while “outside” interns are placed with local recycling agencies and businesses. In both positions, Corpsmembers have the opportunity to learn responsibility, gain confidence, and master a variety of skills, including equipment operation, customer service, leadership development, and teamwork through work experience.

Successes of the Corpsmember Program

Perhaps the most significant indicator of student achievement this past year is the growing number of graduates earning regular diplomas: 38 from the Charter Corpsmember High School while four others earned the GED. This is an increase from the 22 students who received their high school diploma or GED in SY 2002-2003. In an effort to increase the number of graduates, the Corpsmember High School instituted more frequent assessment and progress updates for Corpsmembers by building them into the school schedule, visiting Corpsmembers in the field, and communicating weekly with field supervisors.

Flexibility in the curriculum and class schedule plays an important role as well. Corpsmembers participate in small classes that deliver engaging subject matter. Students choose class schedules that provide them more options to work on individual academic portfolios during the week and often on Saturdays. These changes helped to improve EBCC’s retention rate and Corpsmembers’ length of stay. Where it had hovered between five and seven months previously, the average length of stay is now 10.5 months. Recent graduates, on average, were enrolled for 1.5 years.

EBCC’s daily attendance rate is up as well, at least among its long-term students. (Long-term students are those who have been enrolled for at least 90 continuous school days. This is a state-defined cohort that tracks progress/achievement in alternative schools). During the SY 2003-2004, 78% of long-term students attended school full-time on a daily basis.

Support and Follow-Up Services

Because of the many obstacles Corpsmembers face in their personal lives, graduates need the support services of the EBCC both while they are in the program and after they have graduated. The EBCC supports Corpsmembers in earning their drivers’ licenses by providing a vehicle for the test, instruction for the written exam and driving practice. After graduation, students have 90 to 120 days to move into post-Corps employment or education. Many graduates continue to work at the EBCC as Corpsmembers in the field while taking college courses and/or receiving career and education assistance from the staff. Recent graduates who remain at the EBCC participate in Career Development classes designed to support graduates in their job search, college enrollment, financial aid applications, and further career exploration. Course activities include trips to college campuses, invited guest speakers from various fields, student presentations on career exploration and development activities, and informational interviews and job shadowing.

Of recent graduating classes, nine members remain with the EBCC on field crews while they participate in the career development classes. Three were hired as interns to work side-by-side with city employees at the municipal recycling yards. Others work with private employers. Four Corpsmembers are enrolled part-time in local community colleges;

two have left the Corps to attend local community colleges full-time, reflecting a recent trend of more graduates pursuing postsecondary education.

Other EBCC programs include:

- **Project YES (Youth Engaged in Service)** is a K-12 class, afterschool, weekend and summer-service learning program that offers students the opportunity to learn about their responsibilities as community members by exploring and studying the ecology of their own communities. In addition, through a partnership with California State University at Humboldt, Project YES Fellows receive their teaching credentials while teaching full-time with a mentor teacher who uses service-learning as the major teaching strategy.
- **The AmeriCorps Program** is a city-county violence prevention program where AmeriCorps volunteers engage community-based organizations and county departments to design a model for a safer and more secure Oakland.
- **The Institute for Citizenship Education and Teacher Preparation** develops models focusing on building civil society and the replication of such models.
- **The Elementary level of the EBCC Charter School** currently serves 190 students in kindergarten through 5th grade in a program based on academic, artistic, and civic literacy. In the coming years, EBCC plans to expand the school to include both middle and high school levels.

Staff

Corpsmembers thrive at EBCC because of a dedicated staff that believes in their work and the organization. Director of Programs Michael Smith said, "The staff is amazing. People have had other careers, but wanted to be at the EBCC because of the character and leadership of the organization." The EBCC staff is made up of several key individuals who left the EBCC, built other careers, and later returned to the EBCC because they believe strongly in its work. Some were once Corpsmembers themselves and want to help other youth change their lives in the way they have themselves. The EBCC staff also reflects the diversity of the Bay Area with staff from a wide range of ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Funding

EBCC's budget for SY 2005-2006 is about \$7 million. The California Department of Conservation

provides nearly \$2 million, while \$1.5 million comes from Charter School funding, \$3 million from fee-for-service contracts and the balance from donations and foundation grants. In addition, a significant amount of EBCC funding comes from the recycling program supported by California's state Bottle Bill which refunds deposits on beverage containers. The EBCC collects recyclables from the UC Berkeley, California State University East Bay, the Oakland Coliseum, Oakland Zoo, YMCA, and almost two dozen other clients. Crews of 10 Corpsmembers also engage in fee-for-service projects, both annual and short-term in nature. Examples of clients are local flood control, watershed and water boards and the Oakland Port Authority, as well as cities and non-profit organizations around the Bay Area. These contracts have a combined value of over \$3 million.

The BCC's current staff numbers 150 for all projects, including recycling, fee-for-service work, the K-5 Charter School and the Corpsmember High School. This includes 63 teachers and staff in the schools supplemented by 33 stipend-receiving AmeriCorps volunteers working in the violence prevention program.

In 1985, EBCC was selected by Public/Private Ventures of Philadelphia as the "best practices model" for the Urban Corps Expansion Project, which led to the establishment of 17 more urban conservation corps throughout the nation. Lennon was also the first president of the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (NASCC) in Washington, DC which assisted with the development of 110 local corps around the country. Project YES has served as a national model in service-learning and teacher training. It was one of two programs designated by the California State Department of Education as a leadership program to provide training and technical assistance to school districts. The EBCC also led the Pacific Southwest region for the National Service Learning Clearinghouse. Many of the EBCC Charter School documents are used as exemplars and are promoted by the California Network of Educational Charters, the Charter School Development Center, and the National Charter School Friends Network. The EBCC ran the largest Summer of Service program, the precursor of AmeriCorps, and has for years run one of the largest AmeriCorps programs in the nation. In 2002, Joanna Lennon was awarded the Peter E. Haas Award for Public Service. In 2004, the EBCC was selected by the Edna McConnell Clark

Foundation as one of 20 organizations in the country serving at-risk youth, which given an infusion of funding, could take its model to scale. In 2005, the EBCC was the only organization asked to present at the Congressional Conference on Civic Education.

The East Bay Conservation Corps compels young people to take control of their lives and strives to turn them from victims into self-reliant, contributing citizens in society. The staff celebrates young people and their learning through the arts and through practical activities that are socially and environmentally relevant.

The Youth Employment Partnership

Since 1973, The Youth Employment Partnership (YEP) and its predecessor programs have served 18,000 low-income, at-risk youth, 90% of whom have completed the training programs in which they were enrolled while more than 80% have either found employment or pursued further education. From a small nonprofit organization established by local business and civic leaders to provide short-term, intensive training for entry-level jobs, YEP has become an entrepreneurial, multi-program agency annually serving about 1,000 youth ages 14-24.

YEP's clients roughly mirror the demographics of poverty in Oakland: approximately 60% African American, 15% Asian, 20% Latino, and 5% other racial or ethnic groups. In addition, 20% are teen mothers, 40% do not live with a biological parent, 40% are high school dropouts, 20% are ex-offenders, 20% have learning disabilities, 40% come from households in which English is not the primary language, and 95% live at or below the federal poverty level. Recently, YEP has increased its services to youth who are in, or recently emancipated from, foster care or the juvenile justice system. Through ties to other local service providers, YEP aims to increase both employment and education opportunities to these high-risk youth and contribute to long-term change in these two critical areas.

"We're not interested in training youth for dead-end jobs. Instead we try and give them as many tools in their toolbox as possible, enabling them to have various paths they can explore."

—Michele Clark, YEP Executive Director

YEP offers a continuum of services to in-school and out-of-school youth. YEP consists of a charter high school, a GED preparations program, a Youth-Build, and other employment readiness programs. Its goals for in-school youth are to build their commitment to educate and to help them explore career options, build workplace skills, and avoid negative and self-destructive behaviors. YEP has found that providing summer employment options to youth at an early age helps make smoother transitions to adulthood and self-sufficiency, and thus they can avoid the need for more comprehensive, intensive, and costly programs later in life. YEP's Team Oakland, for example, trains youth in environmental restoration and science. Career Try-Out places youth in summer internships. Career Alternatives provides delinquency prevention services to youth at risk of involvement with the justice system.

Out-of-school youth are enrolled in programs stressing soft skills critical to workplace success, as well as vocational skills, especially in construction, child development, and office technology. All of the young people YEP serves have access to comprehensive support services, including afterschool tutorials, GED and basic skills instruction, mental health and substance abuse counseling, transportation tokens, childcare, parenting education, housing assistance, financial life skills, and more. Each program offers classroom and/or on-the-job training in a vocational skill. All students receive training in career planning, goal-setting and completion, interviewing, application and resume writing, job search and networking skills, attendance and punctuality, peer leadership, and work ethic.

The majority of YEP's programs are located in an historic building in East Oakland. Students enrolled in YouthBuild are currently transforming the building into a modern structure that can house all of YEP's programs, including a new Alameda County school for pregnant and parenting teens. The building also houses YEP's Charter High School and GED courses. YEP expects it to be completed by June 2006, after one year of construction. Programs continue to operate out of the building throughout the construction process.

The new building has been intentionally designed to reflect the needs of YEP's clients. For example, the bathrooms in the new building will be equipped with showers and laundry facilities. Youth who previously lived in group homes were not legally allowed to do

their own laundry, so when they leave the foster care system most of them have no idea how to launder their own clothes. YEP is including washers and dryers in-house to help students overcome this barrier to self-sufficiency.

Out-of-School Youth Programs

YEP's YouthBuild is a collaboration of the Oakland Housing Authority, Oakland Unified School District, and Laney College. The program trains dropouts, ages 18-24, in carpentry and construction to rehabilitate low-income housing. Housing development activities are coordinated between the Oakland Housing Authority and other community-based, nonprofit housing developers. Training activities are coordinated between YEP and the Laney Campus of the Peralta Community College District. The program includes basic skills remediation and academic skills enhancement, classroom training in construction skills, leadership development, community service, on-site work experience in the construction of new affordable housing for low- to very low-income Oakland residents, individualized service planning and counseling/case management, education and career planning, and job development/entrepreneurial opportunities. The program provides a training stipend and assistance with expenses for childcare and transportation. YouthBuild students are also actively engaged in renovating YEP's building. The current program is on target to reach its goal of at least 76% permanent employment and an increase in academic achievement of 1.5 grade levels. (Also see Chapter 17 for more information on the national YouthBuild model.)

YEP-Charter High School is a public high school designed to serve young adults who have already dropped out of high school for at least six months and now want to continue working toward a high school diploma while receiving employment training. YEP-Charter High School enrolled its first 30 students, Grades 9-12, in September 2004 and began a second class of 30 in September 2005. It is designed as a year-round school with fall, spring, and summer semesters. The school works closely with the Oakland Unified School District and utilizes the District's resources (e.g., loaned teachers) to offer a full diploma-credentialed academic program. It combines an academic high school curriculum with job/employment training and hands-on experience in four employment areas: construction, technology,



A YouthBuild student works on the YEP building.

childcare, and career try-outs (paid job opportunities). Throughout the school year, students are also eligible to participate in other paid jobs and training opportunities.

The Charter School was not designed as a comprehensive high school, but rather as a place to stabilize young people who would then transfer back to other educational venues. For this reason, the school lacks traditional nonacademic elements of high school such as dances and extracurricular sports teams. Young people, nevertheless, appear to enjoy their educational experience at YEP; with more than 50% of the inaugural class chose to return the following year.

YEP provides on-site GED training from 12 to 4:30 p.m. each weekday. All students enrolled in employment training programs must spend 50% of their time working on the education curriculum. Students are paid for their employment, but not for their academic time. With a grant from a Give Something Back Business Products a socially-responsible company and local foundations, YEP is in the process of redesigning its GED lab.

The Customized Training Partnership trains young adults ages 18-21, who are leaving the foster care system to begin transitional employment with local employers. The program provides unsubsidized employment and preparation for advancement with local employers such as Home Depot and UPS. Participants also gain academically through GED prep

or local community colleges. Forty young adults were placed in 2004-2005. The program is funded by the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. WIA also funds the Future Workforce program for in-school and out-of-school youth. Out-of-school youth receive intensive training in a skill or trade and work in paid internships based on their career interests. Participants receive work maturity training and career counseling. In-school youth work after school and on weekends.

Knights' Cafe is a student-run cafe located in Oakland International Airport. Youth, ages 16-18 from Castlemont High School learn quality customer service and the fundamentals of operating a business. Cafe profits are then reinvested into YEP operations. YEP also plans to open another cafe at its building once construction is completed.

YEP's AmeriCorps Neighborhood Investment Team provides services in Oakland's Lower San Antonio neighborhood to advance educational, financial literacy, economic, and personal development among some 200 younger children and youth. The program's 90 AmeriCorps volunteers work in YEP programs serving 1,000 Oakland youth annually. Funded by AmeriCorps through the California Service Corps, the Team's intent is to enable AmeriCorps graduates to pursue higher education with their earned education award.

The Mayor's Summer Job Program recruits and prepares youth for summer jobs in the community. Youth participate in intensive trainings for job readiness, after which they are enrolled in YEP's summer programs or interview with local employers. In 2004, 65 of the enrollees were out-of-school youth. The program is funded by the City of Oakland.

YEP is planning to create a Transitional Housing Project at the rear of its building. Housing is a major issue for many young people unable to find stable living situations once they leave the foster care system. YEP hopes to build two buildings that will provide units for first-time home buyers who are making a community contribution (e.g., teachers, community-based organization employees, or police officers) and youth recently emancipated from the foster care system. After two years, first-time home buyers will receive a 50% rebate on their rent to help them buy a home. The Transitional Housing Project will also help foster care youth learn to live independently before moving on to another living situation. YEP has received a Compassion Capital Fund Targeted

Capacity-Building Program planning grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services and has solicited foundation interest in the project. The organization has applied for two YouthBuild grants to fund the construction costs, but if it does not receive the funds, it plans to mortgage the building to pay for the project.

Support Services

All YEP clients have access to additional assistance with issues that may impede their success. The heart of all YEP programs is communal case management. Each case manager has approximately 30 clients, a specific area of focus, and much dialogue among the staff to help meet young people's needs in the program. "There is a lot of round table work among our case managers," said YEP Executive Director Michele Clark.

YEP also helps students reach other seemingly small milestones in their lives, such as obtaining a driver's license. Clark said, "There is no legal way for poor kids to get a driver's license. Oakland police issue more warrants for driving without a license than any other crime. It is a huge problem here." YEP helps students obtain a license by breaking the process up into smaller goals students can strive to reach. Program directors have found that creating manageable goals for students to work towards enables them to make accomplishments without feeling overwhelmed by the complex process. Other services provided, some in-house and others through referrals to outside agencies, include afterschool tutorials, substance abuse counseling, transportation assistance, childcare assistance, and mental health counseling, among others. Funding for support services is through a variety of public sector, private sector, and foundation resources.

Recruitment

YEP recruits for its various programs through churches, schools, and community-based organizations. It screens youth for eligibility factors, including low-income, foster care, court involvement, and homelessness, as well as the young person's personal motivation to succeed. It has four applicants for every spot available and funnels approximately one-fourth of the students not able to enter a YEP program to other places in the Bay Area. The most common reason students are turned away is if staff feel they are not emotionally ready to change their

lives, in which case they are instructed to reapply once they feel more motivated.

Funding

YEP's budget for 2004-2005 totaled \$3.8 million, derived from about 30 different funding sources. Among YEP's major current funders are:

US Department of Labor—Youth Self-Sufficiency Demonstration grant	\$660,000
US Department of Housing and Urban Development—for YouthBuild	\$500,000
US Department of Labor—Workforce Investment Act (WIA)	\$450,000
California Service Corps/ AmeriCorps	\$420,000
City of Oakland Public Works Agency—for Team Oakland	\$250,000
California Board of Corrections—for Career Alternatives	\$200,000
Foundations, corporations, and private donations	\$600,000

YEP operates these diverse programs for about 1,000 young people annually with a staff of only 24 full-time and six part-time staff. Clark has led YEP for 15 years. Together with a strong management team, she and YEP have won recognition and financial support from Oakland's Private Industry Council each of the past 18 years, and from Mayor Jerry Brown and the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, among others.

Lessons for Oakland

Taken together, the Youth Employment Partnership (founded in 1973) and the East Bay Conservation Corps (1983) have accumulated 66 years of wisdom and experience with the many difficult issues of reclaiming young lives. With its impressive record of having pointed 18,000 Oaklanders toward education and respectable employment, YEP offers formidable lessons for urban communities still grappling with how to deal effectively with the obstinate problem of dropout recovery and youth employment. As in other programs across the country, the acclaimed YEP model demands locally appropriate (but widely varying) levels of commitment, experience, entrepreneurship, sacrifice, and resilience, to name just a few. That is a tall order.

The education and service-oriented EBCC, a more specialized endeavor, provides a worthy example of how diverse (and often widely dissimilar) agencies and funding channels can be mobilized to back a worthwhile enterprise. Combining some of the best features of successful recovery programs, the EBCC has found creative ways to serve public needs in environmental preservation and enhancement while preparing once-disconnected young people for new roles as educationally, socially, and civically prepared individuals. Over the course of its 23 years, the East Bay Conservation Corps has served approximately 85,000 young people. This can only be judged a remarkable accomplishment.

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¹ The American Youth Policy Forum has published two reports on service-learning with descriptions of the methodology. See *Finding Common Ground: Service-Learning and Education Reform* (2002) and *Restoring the Balance Between Academics and Civic Engagement in Public Schools* (2005).

² United States General Accounting Office. *School Dropouts: Education Could Play a Stronger Role in Identifying and Disseminating Promising Prevention Strategies: Report to the Honorable Jim Gibbons, House of Representatives*. (2002, February). Retrieved December 27, 2005 from <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d02240.pdf>

CHAPTER 7

Trenton, New Jersey

- *A nontraditional public high school graduating former out-of-school youth and young adults at rates exceeding the traditional high school*
- *A no-nonsense approach to academics and discipline*

New Jersey's capital city, once a heavy manufacturing center, has a population of about 62,000. Poverty in central Trenton is high, but the city is located in prosperous and growing Mercer County. According to the 2000 US Census, 3,897 Trenton residents ages 18-24 (44% of the age group) and 19,938 residents ages 25 and older (38%) lack high school diplomas. In 1999, Trenton Mayor Douglas H. Palmer issued a blunt order to the School Board: "Get those kids off the streets and back in school where they belong." The Trenton Public Schools, an urban district with 13,000 students, four-fifths living in low-income households, was challenged to find a way to reduce a dropout rate approaching 70%.

Trenton's success in addressing this challenge is remarkable. By supporting the reorganization of the city's high school from a conventional one to a school subdivided into small learning communities, and by opening a new school specifically for dropout recovery, the district increased high school enrollment by 40% in the three years from 1999 to 2002, and, more remarkably, almost tripled the number of high school graduates in that same period.

Daylight/Twilight High School

Central to Trenton's success is the Daylight/Twilight High School (DTHS), which began as an alternative dropout recovery program in one vacant parochial school and has now grown to be the high school awarding the largest number of diplomas each year. This successful dropout recovery record was recognized by the State of New Jersey, which named Daylight/Twilight a demonstration model and awarded the Trenton Public Schools \$17 million to build a new facility in downtown Trenton next to a campus of Mercer County Community College (MCCC).

Trenton Public Schools created the Daylight/Twilight High School to deal with the long-standing problem of "too many kids on the corner... too

many kids not finishing school," said veteran Superintendent James "Torch" Lytle. Started in 1999 as a program of Trenton's Central High School, DTHS is now a free-standing school with satellite sites throughout the city.

The school's program is designed to meet the needs of overage and under-credited students ages 16 and older who have academic, behavioral, or social problems. While most DTHS students are returning to school having left it, a significant number are still enrolled in school but are either failing, exhibiting poor attendance, or are considered at risk of dropping out. They make up previous course failures, take required and elective courses, negotiate credit for work and service-learning, and pass state assessments. The DTHS school year consists of four ten-week quarters and a summer program. Students take three courses per quarter, each meeting in 80-minute sessions.

DTHS offers a flexible, shortened school day, with an option of three four-hour shifts (7:30-11:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., or 3:30-7:30 p.m.). The concentrated high school program focuses exclusively on academics, with no "frills" such as lunchroom, library, physical education courses or sports teams. Said Superintendent Lytle: "Students just go to class. It's all business." DTHS also offers flexibility of location. In addition to two main facilities, DTHS operates programs in five satellite locations, and Principal William Tracy said that the school will offer a class wherever 12 or more students are interested. Several groups of students meet regularly in apartment buildings (one group of pregnant and nursing mothers meets in a secure apartment building where they live and study with DTHS teachers).

*Nontraditional, yes...but **not** an alternative school*

DTHS co-founder and Principal William Tracy makes it very clear that the school is not an alternative school. With flexibility of time and location and a stripped-down, no-frills academic program leading to a regular high school diploma, Daylight/Twilight is an attractive option for older teens and adults who want legitimate proof of high school completion. The school emphasizes core math, language arts, and science and technology content and skills, but is moving toward more career-focused academics.

Student Population

DTHS serves about 3,000 students over the course of a year, with 1,500 to 2,000 students enrolled at any one time. The student body is 72% African American, 26% Latino, and 2% other racial and ethnic groups (African, Haitian, Polish, Middle Eastern, Jamaican, and Asian). About 15% of the student population are recent immigrants; approximately 60% are under age 21. The majority of DTHS students are from families with incomes at or below the poverty level. Many students, including those under age 21, are parents. While some students are referred to DTHS from Trenton's Central High School because of behavioral problems, the majority have been out of school for some time before they enter Daylight/Twilight.

Principal Tracy believes that DTHS students are basically "good kids" who have been damaged by poverty and poor schooling. He said that his students ought to have additional opportunities to build structure and discipline into their lives and to experience the feeling of success earned through hard work. The DTHS model harnesses the powerful motivation of students, said Tracy, to find a decent, legal, entry-level job for which a high school diploma is now essential. At the same time, DTHS's close partnership with the local community college enables many of its graduates to pursue postsecondary education.

Superintendent Lytle noted that "part of what makes DTHS work is the sense of camaraderie among the students. Almost all have had bad experiences with schooling in the past, but at DTHS they all work together to make sure everyone gets through. They are a motivated group."

The Daylight/Twilight Curriculum

At admission, each student's high school record is reviewed to determine which course credits can be

"How could I keep preaching to my two children about the importance of education if I hadn't attended to my own? Teachers really cared about me and kept me on task. Now I am in a better position to provide for my children. I am grateful to DTHS for teaching me that education comes first."

—Maisha Robertson, 27-year-old mother of two
and DTHS graduate

"I was struggling to raise a child, work, and attend school. The Daylight/Twilight program allowed me to succeed when I was about to fail."

—Marcy Grant, DTHS graduate

transferred, and work experience is reviewed for additional credits. Students are given diagnostic exams in core subject areas to establish their educational levels. Teachers meet with students to determine suitable classes and placement. A special education specialist meets with teachers and students to discuss individual needs, and a reading specialist reviews each student's preliminary work to ensure that proper courses have been assigned. Students are generally placed in junior- or senior-level classes, depending on previous credits earned and demonstrated ability. A typical student spends two years at DTHS if he or she enters with no credits; however, many students, especially older ones, have previous credits and graduate at a faster rate. Students are required to complete 115 credits to graduate and may accumulate up to 15 credits every 10 weeks.

Students at DTHS are offered a range of academic courses, though because they have failed mainly core courses in their previous schools, they generally concentrate on recovering those credits. They are required to take at least two technology courses and sit for their International Computer Driving License (ICDL), an industry-recognized certificate of basic computer literacy. Thus, when students graduate, they have a diploma and an internationally-recog-

nized set of skills. In addition to credit for required academic courses, all students are eligible to receive credits for community service and work experience.

Daylight/Twilight High School emphasizes hands-on, career-based education, and it is moving toward a structure of career academies. Eventually, administrators would like to see every DTHS student enrolled in meaningful job training and or college classes while attending high school. In Fall 2005, DTHS launched an Information Technology (IT) Career Pathways Program. Students study for their diploma, take entry level IT courses at Mercer County Community College (MCCC), and are placed in apprenticeship or intern positions, primarily with the school system, the district's Tech Facilitators, or local nonprofit organizations. Plans for other career-based tracks—culinary, graphic arts, cosmetology, and business—are pending.

Through extensive planning and collaboration with the College of New Jersey, DTHS is developing a Design, Engineering, and Technology (DET) Academy to train students for a new generation of DET careers. In addition, DTHS is also collaborating with MCCC to develop a dual-enrollment program, the Capitol City Scholars program, which will enroll students in both DTHS and MCCC following an intensive four-week summer college preparatory program. DTHS and MCCC are planning to establish an Early College Program on two floors of the new DTHS building under construction. Beginning in SY 2004-2005, DTHS mandated that all seniors take the MCCC placement test, followed by college preparation workshops and college counseling.

DTHS also operates an English as a Second Language program in two sites serving a total of 325 students who hail from five continents.

Discipline and the DTHS Intervention System

Daylight/Twilight High School plays hardball. If a student is absent more than three times in a 10-week session, he or she moves to "audit" status and receives no credit toward graduation until returning to regular status. Requirements for students to arrive on-time, with all the necessary learning materials (pens, books, etc.), are firm. No bathroom visits are allowed during classes.

Principal William Tracy argues that DTHS's "intervention system" is at the core of its success. Teachers do not engage in discipline in the classroom;

instead, they signal for help from an administrator. This allows them to teach students who are in class and ready to learn, leaving necessary disciplinary action to administrators who deal with students outside the classroom. Following an initial counseling session, the student must meet at the end of the school day with his or her lead teacher and each subject area teacher. Administrators and teachers feel that this process explains their unique success in retaining students in school and improving their academic and social/emotional progress.

Funding

With its stripped-down, academics-only focus, DTHS is relatively inexpensive to run. Staffing is expanded or contracted based on enrollment. For students under 21, funding is \$9,200 per pupil, based on average daily attendance. The New Jersey Adult High School program and the Trenton School District combine to contribute about half that level for those ages 21 and older.

The State of New Jersey awarded Trenton \$17 million for a demonstration project to create a community school housing DTHS and creating an urban campus that links the Public Library, Mercer County Community College, and the YMCA. The community-based design features of the plan include school-to-career activities, wrap-around community access to the campus from 7:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m., and the opportunity for high school students to take college-level courses. The building is scheduled for completion in fall 2006.



Daylight/Twilight students Janay Brown (left) and Charlene Young (right) with DTHS Technology Facilitator, Jaime Maniatis (center). (Photo by Victoria Yokota)

District Superintendent James Lytle has been extremely supportive of DTHS. “We’ll provide the educational program services if you can gather a group of 12 or more people who want to complete high school,” said Lytle, who brought Bill Tracy with him from Philadelphia, where the daylight/twilight concept did not enjoy the same degree of political and community support.

Evidence of Success

The daily attendance rate at DTHS averages 94%. DTHS graduates between 450 and 550 students each year, essentially doubling the high school diplomas awarded by Trenton’s Central High School. Follow-up data on DTHS graduates show over 85% working, in the military, or attending college full-time. DTHS administrators report an increasing number of students moving to full-time employment after graduation or moving up in their present jobs, as well as a large number successfully completing college. In SY 2004-2005, 56 new DTHS graduates enrolled in MCCC.

DTHS students arrive with deeply entrenched behaviors and very negative attitudes toward school. The gradual change in this perception toward a more positive view of education may be the most important indicator of success for the school. The students treat the school’s physical plant, staff, and visitors with respect. The school has a very strict code of behavior and rules that students rarely complain about as they come to understand the need for structure in their lives. Administrators report that students come to realize that a standardized behavioral code is conducive to a successful learning environment, and they accept that they have shared responsibility to create a purposeful atmosphere. While many DTHS students have had discipline problems in their previous schools, astoundingly, DTHS has never had a fight and the suspension rate is zero. School administrators proudly point to the fact that the school has no metal detectors and only two security guards for a population of 3,000 spread across five campuses.

Replication

A combination of factors—notably Trenton’s relatively small size and school population, the decision to concentrate nearly all its efforts within the school system, and an extremely serious, no-frills approach—distinguish this successful dropout recovery effort. The Trenton program values achievement,

readiness to learn, and, above all, student self-discipline—and it works. Although a well-qualified staff is clearly student-oriented, its members by and large do not consider themselves surrogate family members. They are on board to see that the education and career preparation of badly disrupted young lives are put back on course, and there is no nonsense in their approach.

No two reclamation projects are identical, though they have similar overall objectives. The Trenton model is markedly different from many other successful programs. Though the young people it serves may be very much like those in other dropout reclamation efforts, Trenton sits in a prosperous county whose workforce sorely needs entry-level workers. Its political and educational leaders are therefore unwilling to write off a large number of young people. Would similar models of recovery work as well in communities where entry-level employment is scarce for high school graduates and the labor market is considerably tighter? Given the depth and scale of the commitment and the high quality of leadership on display at Daylight/Twilight High School, it seems so.

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CHAPTER 8

Baltimore, Maryland

- *Powerful mayoral-level commitment to reconnecting out-of-school youth in a depressed city*
- *Skillful use of diverse sponsors, funding sources, and curricula*

Baltimore is the only major American city whose inhabitants—651,154 in 2000—can visit their favorite local pubs to listen to its young mayor play and sing in his own Irish rock band. The city boasts world-famous universities, hospitals, and cultural institutions, as well as strongly supported major league baseball and football teams. This array, plus an attractively renovated downtown harbor area, should by all rights help make Baltimore a great place to live. But on the whole, it is only for its middle- and upper-income residents.

The other side of the coin presents an all-too-familiar picture of a once-thriving shipping and manufacturing center struggling with high rates of unemployment, undereducation, poverty, and crime. Fortunately, “Charm City’s” past three mayors have been seriously committed to revitalizing Baltimore, especially and sensibly, to improving opportunities for the city’s youth. Leadership from City Hall spurred development of a comprehensive city-wide youth development system with the Mayor’s Office of Employment Development (MOED) at its helm. Well-established collaborations among MOED, the Youth Council of the Baltimore Workforce Investment Board (BWIB), and community-based youth service providers have evolved into a system that readies many of the city’s less-privileged youth for passage to successful adulthood.

Of Baltimore’s 31,892 young people ages 16-19, nearly 9,500 (roughly 30%) are neither enrolled in school nor have a high school diploma, while 5,743 (18%) are neither employed nor in the labor force. While the 2005 Maryland Report Card for Baltimore City lists a dropout rate of 11.65% for Grades 9-12, local sources put it closer to 50%. (As previously noted, because there is no uniform national method of determining dropout rates, such figures are impossible to compare and may not be accurate.)

On a more positive note, the MOED-led effort to attack this and related issues offers a clear demon-

stration of how coordinated city-wide leadership can do much to reconnect dropouts. The programs described here are typical of Baltimore’s commitment: the **Career Academy at Harbor City High School**, the **Westside Youth Opportunity (YO) Center**, **Civic Works**, the **Healthcare Careers Alliance**, and the **Fresh Start program at the Living Classrooms Foundation**. All are supported and/or endorsed by MOED and are among the options available to Baltimore’s out-of-school youth.

The Mayor’s Office of Employment Development and The Baltimore Workforce Investment Board Youth Council

For three decades, the Mayor’s Office of Employment Development has helped to recover out-of-school youth. Nevertheless, “Baltimore City has a 50% dropout rate,” said MOED Director Karen Sitnick. “The numbers are staggering. They are our future workforce. If we don’t reconnect them, these kids are the ones who will be on public assistance and involved in the criminal justice system.”

While MOED focuses primarily on employment, it has been taking a larger role in improving academic opportunities for out-of-school youth to help them secure living-wage jobs. “As an agency focused on workforce development, we recognized very early that we must work with our education system and the community at large to build non-traditional

“Baltimore City has a 50% dropout rate. The numbers are staggering. They are our future workforce. If we don’t reconnect them, these kids are the ones who will be on public assistance and involved in the criminal justice system.”

— Karen Sitnick, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Employment Development

pathways leading to academic credentialing. We also needed to develop strategies that would help youth understand the relevance of education and employment,” said Alice Cole, MOED’s Director of Career Development Services.

MOED’s efforts to create a city-wide youth system have been greatly enhanced by the 1998 federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which led to the creation of the Baltimore Workforce Investment Board (BWIB) Youth Council. Since February 2000, the Youth Council has been making recommendations on youth policy to the BWIB while serving as one of its standing committees. The Council’s ambitious goals are to “build a comprehensive youth system in Baltimore City; implement a summer jobs program for city youth; and establish a viable advocacy committee to address policy, sustainability, and marketing of Baltimore’s Youth System.”

As the decision-maker for youth funding under WIA in Baltimore, the Youth Council selects youth service providers to carry out its vision. The current Youth Council Service Providers are the Career Academy at Harbor City High School, the Baltimore City Community College Youth Empowerment Program, Chesapeake Center for Youth Development, South Baltimore Career Center, the Healthcare Careers Alliance, and Bon Secours of Maryland Foundation’s Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Program for in-school youth. The Youth Council monitors the performance of providers through quarterly visits, technical support, and guidance for effective programming while MOED provides progress reports on direct service providers to the Council.

In 2000, Baltimore received a \$44 million five-year federal Youth Opportunity (YO) grant from the US Department of Labor. “Working on the YO application for three months,” said Sitnick, “catalyzed the conversation and helped to solidify relationships. The grant helped to keep people at the table even more than before.” Youth Opportunity funding supported the development of two comprehensive one-stop centers and YO centers and three YO satellites in Baltimore. It also led to trial implementation of a “Funds Follow Students” strategy and subsequent exploration of systems to track youth.

Funds Follow Students

The idea of funds following students refers to state education funding that travels with students to alternative venues and vendors (usually until age

21) to earn a high school graduation credential or its equivalent. Baltimore implemented the concept to allow students enrolled in Baltimore City Public Schools System (BCPSS) to be served by education providers other than itself. In 2003, the Baltimore Youth Opportunity System (BYOS) negotiated funding and education services with BCPSS. The basic premise was that youth would be co-enrolled in both BYOS and BCPSS’ Harbor City High School (HCHS) in order for BYOS to retain a percentage of the per pupil funding that the school district receives from the state.

When a financially strapped BCPSS failed to provide the promised funds during the second year of the arrangement, BYOS and HCHS used an alternative strategy of placing a BCPSS teacher at the Westside YO and allowing YO participants to co-enroll at HCHS and earn credit using the Novell computer program. Systemwide, about 50 YO participants co-enrolled in HCHS each year for the two years of the “Funds Follow Student” program and 15 earned a high school diploma. This co-enrollment program was available to youth at the Westside YO Center and at an additional off-site location.

Career Academy at Harbor City High School

The Career Academy is one of four Harbor City High School (HCHS) locations providing 16-21 year-old BCPSS students with education, project-based



Victoria Webb working at CVS Pharmacy after completing a customized training program to be a pharmacy assistant. (Photo courtesy of MOED)

experiential learning, career-specific training, and social adjustment skills. The Academy demonstrates enhanced collaboration among MOED, BWIB, and HCHS to expand educational options for out-of-school youth.

The Baltimore City Career Academy opened as the Learning Center in 1973, with initial offerings of GED preparation and job skills training and placement to both adults and youth. Realizing that youth needed more specific supports, in the late 1980s, MOED transformed the Learning Center into the Career Academy as a means for youth to work toward the GED and obtain job skills and experience in getting employed. Over the years, the relationship between the Career Academy and HCHS has evolved into a formal partnership forged through the process of applying jointly for WIA funds. Today, the Career Academy at HCHS, co-managed by MOED and BCPSS with sponsorship from BWIB, serves approximately 150 young people annually from nearly every neighborhood in Baltimore.

Baltimore youth seeking to enroll at the Academy are first assessed using the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and must test at 7th grade reading and math levels. Students who test below that standard are referred to literacy programs offered by local service-providers, including two MOED-sponsored GED programs. These tutorial programs help students raise their reading and math levels in order to enroll in the Career Academy. Applicants may retake the TABE every three months after completing remedial courses. Typically, students enter the diploma track component of the program needing an additional eight to 10 high school credits to graduate.

To orient youth to postsecondary education options, Career Academy students may participate in Diploma Plus, a rigorous high school program for out-of-school youth and youth at-risk of dropping out. Its academic component emphasizes contextual learning and portfolio development in which students apply their growing knowledge and skills to real-world projects. In the final stage of the program (the Plus Phase), students are presented with challenging transitional experiences in which they encounter an adult world of responsibility while remaining in a supportive high school program. In the Plus Phase, students must complete several major projects, a structured internship, and one or more credit-level college courses to earn a high school diploma. Completing the Plus Phase enables students to attend

"I like the Career Academy because it's a lot more structured than regular public schools. The teachers really try to help you become a better person and be all that you can be to become successful. The classrooms are a lot smaller and that helps, because you can receive individual attention and it is self-paced. They help you find a job or colleges to attend after you complete your GED courses or receive your diploma."

— Career Academy Student

college classes at Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) and earn college credits tuition-free while earning a high school diploma at the Career Academy.

Career Academy students may start taking college classes in the 10th grade and can earn up to six college credits per school year. They are immersed in the college environment, attend classes with regular college students, and are not identified as high school students to their classmates or professors. Diploma Plus students receive college identification cards and can use on-campus facilities. Once enrolled in the program, they must select a major area of study. After graduating from high school, they may continue to attend the college full-time and must apply for financial aid. The college enrolls about 300 Diploma Plus students annually from area high schools.

The Academy has consistently enrolled 30 to 35 youth annually in the Plus phase of Diploma Plus. Although tuition for Diploma Plus students continues to be provided through the city to BCCC, budget reductions have forced cutbacks in books formerly provided.

Students may also choose the GED route at the Career Academy. If they encounter barriers that prevent them from completing the Plus Phase of the program, they may work with a counselor and other support staff to transfer into the GED program.

The Academy responds to Baltimore's employment needs by featuring workplace training for in-demand occupations, such as landscaping, tourism, human services, information technology, health services, and business technology. Academy students

benefit from the program expertise and employment networks of MOED and BWIB. To bridge academic learning and real-world experiences, community and business partners serve as mentors and help youth in their transitions to job settings through training that includes soft skills, youth internships, and development of a career plan.

Working with the Career Academy, employers expose young people to expectations in the workplace and instill essential values in them. The Career Academy curriculum also incorporates the Skills USA workplace readiness and leadership development curriculum funded by the US Department of Labor. This national program encourages local and statewide competitions for youth to demonstrate workplace skills and knowledge learned from the curriculum. In 2005, ten Career Academy students from Baltimore participated in the local competition, and five winners competed in the statewide championships.

2004-2005 Career Academy Student Demographics

100%	Baltimore residents
100%	Former Out-of-School Youth
51%	Male, 49% Female
99%	African American
85%	Pregnant or parenting
15%	Juvenile court-involved
3%	Homeless
3%	Involved with gang-related activity
1%	In foster care

The Career Academy has created special ties to the Woodstock Job Corps Center that enable Career Academy students to co-enroll in Job Corps while participating in an occupational skills training program at the Academy. Job Corps offers on-site business technology classes at the Academy and offers certification to youth who complete the program. Job Corps provides Academy students opportunities for business certification, job shadowing, and internships. Anne Arundel County Community College

provides curriculum and instructors for this Job Corps program. Annual funding for 30 Job Corps slots at the Career Academy comes from the US Department of Labor Workforce Investment Act. (See Chapter 13 for a discussion of Job Corps).

Primary funding for the Career Academy comes through a WIA subcontract from the BWIB Youth Council. To receive these funds, programs must demonstrate that they can leverage additional funding and develop useful partnerships. One of the Academy's core relationships is with Harbor City High School, which provides certified teachers, an assistant principal, a part-time guidance counselor, and a part-time social worker. In lieu of directly receiving funds from the school district, all services and staffing are provided in kind. The Academy has also developed the know-how to leverage funding through private resources and fundraising.

In SY 2004-2005, the Academy served 150 16-21 year-olds. Potential participants customarily hear about the Career Academy through word of mouth, although there is some recruitment through the Youth Council, referrals from the Departments of Juvenile Justice and Social Services, and outreach to high school administrators.

The relationship with HCHS offers Career Academy students a wider range of educational opportunities than they might otherwise have had while allowing flexible scheduling options to better meet their needs. To create a personalized learning environment, classes at the Academy are small, with a maximum student-to-teacher ratio of 15:1. Students work with assigned staff and mentors to develop an individual learning plan reflecting their interests, needs, and goals. The Academy's curriculum is aligned to local and state standards and integrates career-relevant reading, science, and math. All students take multiple high school assessment tests in core classes and fulfill a state requirement of 75 service-learning hours for graduation. A state-certified diploma is granted by BCPSS.

The work of the Career Academy is made possible by MOED's expanding relationships with long-time partners and its ability to develop innovative strategies for increasing secondary and postsecondary education options for out-of-school youth. More than 70% of Career Academy students either complete the program with a diploma, GED, or job, or go on to attend college. In 2005, 34 students earned Maryland State diplomas (GEDs) and 13 students

graduated with high school diplomas. The Career Academy was recognized by the US Department of Labor and the National Youth Employment Coalition as a PEPNet Awardee in 2000.

Baltimore Youth Opportunity System

When the US Department of Labor issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Youth Opportunity (YO) program, Baltimore already had developed a network of service providers working with out-of-school youth. Having this system in place facilitated the growth of youth services in Baltimore and the city was awarded a five-year YO grant in 2000 to work with 14-21 year-olds in the city's Empowerment Zones (EZs). (See Chapter 19 on the federal Youth Opportunity grant program.)

The Baltimore Youth Opportunity System (BYOS) was created to "increase employment and raise high school completion rates, as well as improve the long-term economic well-being of youth living in the Empowerment Zone (EZ) communities." In partnership with the BWIB and its Youth Council, MOED is responsible for oversight of BYOS. Although the five-year YO grant was slated to end in June 2005, MOED received a no-cost extension to operate until June 2006 using unspent funds.

Baltimore's YO system operates two full-service centers on the east and west sides of the Baltimore EZ, along with three satellite locations in the southern bordering neighborhoods. MOED operates the Westside YO Center on its own and contracts with four community organizations to operate the other centers. The design of the YO Centers builds upon the WIA one-stop concept of having comprehensive services easily accessible at all neighborhood locations. This user-friendly, youth-centered system emphasizes asset-building and helping youth develop their strengths and talents through designing a career route.

A key focus of the YO Centers is to connect Baltimore youth to available resources and comprehensive services in their neighborhoods. The Centers offer a range of academic options, youth development activities, career planning and personal supports. They engage such stakeholders as employers, BCPSS, families, faith-based institutions, and youth themselves. Additionally, YO Centers collaborate with the MOED and the EZ one-stop career centers. The length of participation in the program is determined by when both academic and employment goals are



Youth Opportunity students explore careers in the bio-tech industry during a job shadowing day. (Photo courtesy of MOED)

met, a span that usually lasts from 18 to 24 months.

The YO Centers serve mostly out-of-school youth ages 14-21, with an average of 800 youth voluntarily enrolling annually. Of the 4,344 youth who have participated in YO since its inception, 97% have been African American, 44% of whom were female and 56% male. The Westside YO staff estimate that the annual cost per student is in the \$5,000-7,000 range.

The YO Baltimore Impact Report of September 2005 found that the program is having a positive impact on participants. They earn 35% more and are employed at a 42% higher rate than nonparticipants and out-of-school YO members earn GEDs at twice the rate of nonparticipants. Since the beginning of BYOS in 2000, YO has enrolled 4,344 youth (3,133 out-of-school and 1,211 in-school youth). Of these, 2,218 completed job readiness training, 672 earned diplomas (200 GEDs and 472 high school diplomas), and 289 enrolled in college (186 in community colleges, 103 in four-year institutions.)

Westside YO Center

The Westside YO Center, located in Baltimore's Sandtown neighborhood, has a spacious facility including a fitness room, a computer lab, a resource library, a recreational room called the "Speak Easy," a fully-equipped recording studio, a multipurpose room where youth can organize and conduct conferences and town hall meetings, and a pantry stocked

with items from the Maryland Food Bank. An on-site (but separately administered) day care facility is planned. Through an arrangement with the Baltimore City Health Department, youth have access to on-site dental services, an on-site nurse practitioner one-and-one-half days per week, and health education and health services such as physical examinations. The Center also offers youth on-site counseling for substance abuse and mental services through a contract with Baltimore Mental Health.

The basic goal of the Westside YO Center is to connect youth to employment and education services under the guidance and support of qualified caring adults. The Westside YO Center employs a staff of 22. Upon enrolling, youth are assessed using the TABE, and those results provide the data for an Individual Opportunity Plan that each young person creates with an assigned Employment Advocate/Case Manager. Employment Advocates assist youth in securing a three-month, 30-hour per week, minimum-wage paid internship funded by YO. Between 35 and 40 youth at Westside YO participate in the internship program; systemwide, about 150 youth participate each year.

Employment Advocates are youth development specialists who act as gatekeepers, assisting youth in maneuvering through all of the options and opportunities at the Center. On average their individual case load is 75 young people. Once youth are placed in jobs, Job Coaches work with YO participants and act as the liaison between the Center and employers. Job Coaches contact employers to track progress and determine whether or not the young person requires additional support services.

Before the Westside YO Center opened, staff members underwent an intensive training session provided by the Sar Levitan Center at the Johns Hopkins University Institute for Policy Studies (IPS). MOED and IPS created the Youth Practitioner Institute through which all staff participated in a rigorous youth development training program. A similar program was adapted for YO participants interested in working in youth programs themselves. As part of the training, youth become paid “apprentices” and are assigned to the Center for a year. Upon completion, they may interview for a full-time staff position. Of the 10 participants in the last group, eight were hired at YO Centers, while the other two found employment in the Baltimore Department of Juvenile Justice and Health Department. The Center assesses

staff in a weekly performance review, a monthly staff review of overall performance, and a quarterly report card.

The academic options at the Westside YO Center include pre-GED training, GED preparation, and credit recovery through either co-enrollment at Harbor City High School or use of the Novell online self-paced credit recovery program operated by Baltimore City Community College. The Westside YO Center contracts with BCCC for training with the Novell computer program. Currently, there are two instructors at the Center. System-wide, the two main centers each have two GED instructors, and each of the satellite centers has one.

Civic Works

Civic Works is a team-based urban service corps program that engages youth ages 17-25 in service to the city through a blending of education, urban revitalization, workforce development, and other community service initiatives. (See Chapter 18 describing service and conservation corps.) Since 1993, Civic Works AmeriCorps members have engaged in developmental activities such as skills training, GED instruction, job placement assistance, professional development, education, and citizenship. The program lasts 11 months with Corpsmembers participating for an average of seven months. (Full-time AmeriCorps members are enrolled for 11 months and part-time summer members for 2.5 months.)

Recruitment for Civic Works primarily occurs by word of mouth, but there is some targeted recruiting through the YO Centers and the Empowerment Zone, particularly for Civic Works’ YouthBuild program. The application and selection process includes several interviews with staff. In 2004, Civic Works engaged 149 youth.

Each Civic Works team has a supervisor for a team of two to eight Corpsmembers. This small staff-to-participant ratio allows the team supervisor to act as both instructor and counselor. Team leaders assess Corpsmembers after the first 30 days to judge basic rule compliance, such as punctuality, attendance, appearance, and attitude. Corpsmembers collaborate with their supervisors to develop a work plan and a competency resume and are evaluated on a quarterly basis. Teams serve four days a week with one day of development, which may include GED preparation. Although there is some instruction at the Civic Works headquarters, teams meet mostly at their

2004 Civic Works Corpsmembers

149	Corpsmembers
64%	female, 36% male
71%	African American
22%	White
4%	Asian/Pacific Islander
3%	Latino
21%	Lacked a high school diploma
11%	Had a high school diploma or GED, but had not engaged in any postsecondary education
23%	Had a family income of less than \$15,000
19%	Were previously TANF recipients
15%	Received public assistance at entry
13%	Were previously court involved
1%	Had been in the foster care system

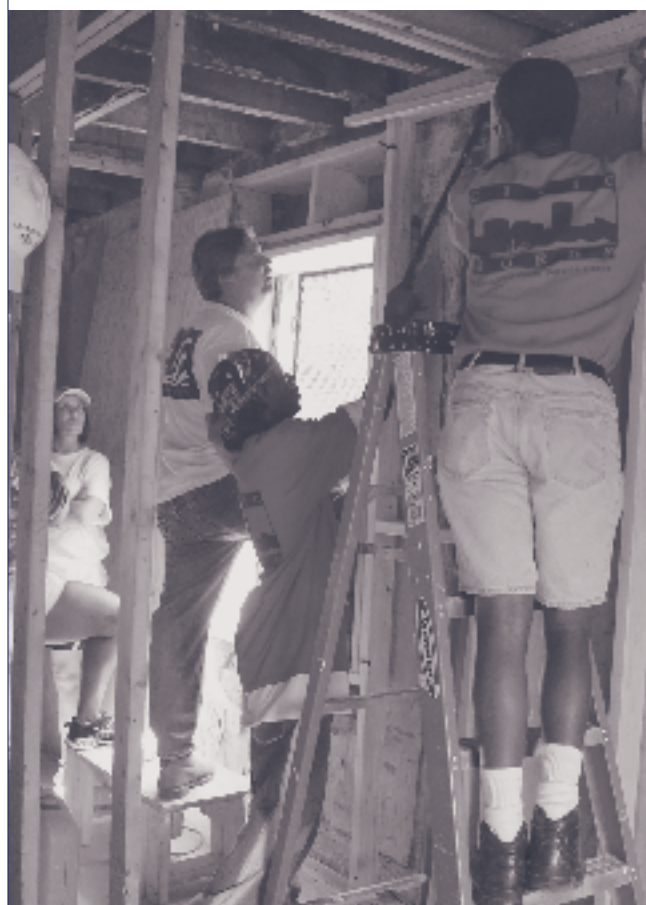
work sites for instruction. Full-time Corpsmembers receive some childcare and transportation assistance. Monthly corps-wide community meetings are held to foster a sense of community in the Corps.

Programs

Civic Works has several programs, the largest of which are AmeriCorps, Project Liberty, YouthBuild, Vacant Lot Conversion and LAMP, B'more Green, Restoration of Clifton Mansion, and Teach Baltimore. In its **AmeriCorps** program, Civic Works places tutors at afterschool programs throughout Baltimore to help improve the reading and computer skills of school-age children who are not performing at grade-level. **Project Liberty**, funded by the US Department of Homeland Security, disseminates information on disaster preparedness to community groups and schools. Program partners include the Baltimore City Health Department and Office of Emergency Management and the Center for International Emergency Disaster and Refugee Studies at The Johns Hopkins University. **YouthBuild**, in

partnership with the Housing Authority of Baltimore City, enables out-of-school youth in the EZ to learn home construction skills and study for their GED while converting vacant lots into housing for Section 8 residents. (See Chapter 17 for more information on the national YouthBuild program.) The **Vacant Lot Conversion Teams** convert up to 15 lots into parks and gardens and **B'more Green** trains participants for entry-level positions in brownfield revegetation, forestation, and phytoremediation projects. The **Mansion Restoration Project**, works to restore Clifton Mansion, the summer home of Johns Hopkins and now Civic Works' headquarters, into its 19th century form. **Teach Baltimore** is an eight-week summer program placing more than 40 reading instructors at several city elementary schools.

Service projects are selected only if they promote growth and development for the Corpsmembers and meet the needs and goals of the community's service partners. Each team requires different qualifications



Civic Works students work with an instructor to measure the interior of a building site. (Photo courtesy of Civic Works)

and youth applying for Civic Works must specify their interest and meet specific requirements such as EZ residency to qualify for Civic Works' YouthBuild team. Civic Works is also involved in workforce development through the Healthcare Careers Alliance (see program description below). These service projects constitute a genuine immersion into the Baltimore community and reflect the pressing challenges and struggles that individual Corpsmembers face on a daily basis. The relevance of the projects and the Corpsmembers' ability to see the direct results of their work in the community cause a "ripple effect" that is often life-changing for Corpsmembers and contributes to the high Civic Works retention and annual graduation rates of 65-70%.

Civic Works partners with local carpenter and builder apprenticeship programs and trade schools and has links to FedEx and Struever Brothers Construction which provide entry-level training and direct hiring. Civic Works engages business partners in the design of programs, thereby creating an ongoing positive relationship between the Corps and employers. Employers comment that graduates of Civic Works have a strong combination of soft and technical skills and work experience that prepare them well for permanent employment.

Civic Works is a major player in Baltimore's youth policy structure. It holds two seats on the Youth Council and has staffers who attend on a

Since 2001, Civic Works has partnered with the McElderry Park Community Association and the Amazing Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church to create a community park where there were once abandoned row homes. The Sacred Commons, also known as the Port Street Project, is a small garden oasis in East Baltimore that includes a vegetable garden, meditation labyrinth, children's garden, and perennial nursery. Civic Works distributes free plants to community gardeners and provides free gardening workshops. The Horticultural Society of Maryland has also worked with Civic Works in constructing a garden shed. A sign outside of the garden explains the labyrinth: "A common space for all. A winding path in which you cannot get lost. A place where people can walk and gain spiritual healing. A witness for the peace and healing that we deserve in our community."

semi-regular basis. It enjoys a strong relationship with MOED, having had contracts with the YO program for seven years. MOED also regularly asks Civic Works to lead and apply for special projects.

Expanding Educational Opportunities

Civic Works has a GED instructor on staff at the YouthBuild site to provide options for out-of-school youth to connect to academic opportunities within its relatively short program cycle of 7 to 11 months. It is also working to create a YouthBuild charter school through a three-year grant from YouthBuild USA and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, from which it received a \$75,000 implementation grant. In 2004, Civic Works approached BCPSS for assistance and a three-year trial period at Francis Wood High School began. Through this initiative, Civic Works joined the Francis Wood's School Improvement Team to consider dividing the large comprehensive high school into several smaller academies. Under the proposed redesign, Civic Works would create a healthcare academy and a technology/construction academy in addition to expanding the 9th grade training program in life skills. These academies would provide one-stop services in the high school setting under guidance from the city's Department of Social Services.



The Sacred Commons Community Park created by Civic Works Corpsmembers.

2004 Civic Work Results

78%	Completed
113	Earned an AmeriCorps Education Award
Of those who completed training:	
52%	Were employed and pursuing further education
23%	Were employed
14%	Were pursuing further service
11%	Were pursuing further education
Those employed were engaged in:	
27%	Youth-work
13.5%	Administrative or clerical jobs
13.5%	Construction
11%	Security
8%	Fast food/food service/cooking
6%	Health care
6%	Warehouse/laborer
3%	Cosmetology
3%	Driving/transportation
3%	Military
3%	Veterinarian services
3%	Unknown
66%	Of Corps members placed in post service employment in 2004 remained employed for six months or more.

Funding

Civic Works has an annual budget of approximately \$2.5 million. About 80% of the funding comes from the Corporation for National and Community Service AmeriCorps, US Department of Housing and Urban Development for YouthBuild funding, the US Department of Labor, Community Development Block Grants, and local and state dollars. Civic Works also raises about 10% of its budget from private sources, including foundations and corporations, and 10% in kind. It is hard to determine the cost per Corpsmember since Civic Works programs vary in length from eight weeks to one year.

In 2002, Civic Works hired Abt Associates researchers to conduct an independent study of the Community Lot Team and the Recreation and Parks Center program. The study found that every dollar invested produced more than two dollars in benefits

for Corpsmembers and the larger society. Additional recognition of Civic Works includes the National Youth Employment Coalition's PEPNet Award in 1999 and a Renewal Award in 2003, and the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (NASCC) Excellence in Corps Operations award in 2003. Civic Works was chosen among 50 programs nationwide by Innovations in Civic Participation and America's Service Commissions as an Innovative AmeriCorps program.

Healthcare Careers Alliance

The Healthcare Careers Alliance (HCCA), a collaborative effort of Civic Works and three hospitals—Johns Hopkins Health System/The Johns Hopkins Hospital (JHH), the University of Maryland Medical Systems, and Life Bridge Health—prepares 16-21 year-olds for careers in one of the three hospitals. Established in 2004, this year-round program for in- and out-of-school youth provides paid training, skills development, life skills, on-the-job training, academic credentials, and employment. As future employers of youth, the participating hospitals outline desirable job skills and develop a training curriculum responsive to their needs. The major incentives for out-of-school youth are guaranteed full-time job placement and opportunities for career growth upon successful completion of the six-week training component provided by Civic Works.

The Healthcare Careers Alliance was built on the successes of the 2000 Welfare-to-Work initiative in which JHH and Civic Works partnered to transition adults into full-time unsubsidized employment. As of 2004, 70% of Alliance graduates remained employed. Building upon this record, MOED expanded the program model to include youth. Civic Works was awarded a grant from MOED and created HCCA with the help of JHH. Currently, the Healthcare Careers Alliance is a 2004-2006 BWIB Youth Council Service Provider that serves 100 youth annually. Funding for the Alliance is provided by WIA, with the partnership hospitals providing in-kind resources.

HCCA operates with cohorts of 12 to 17 youth who engage in six weeks of classroom training, six weeks of a paid internship at a health care institution, and, finally, full-time employment. Typically, there are four cohorts per year and a three-to-four week gap between cycles. Waiting lists of about 25 students for each of the last two cohorts attest to a

strong demand for the program. Young people are recruited through such avenues as the Baltimore Department of Social Services (youth leaving foster care), community organizations, local churches, and one-stop employment centers. Potential HCCA participants learn about the program from flyers distributed in neighborhoods, and word of mouth also brings many candidates to the program.

The application process includes a meeting with staff to become familiar with the program, assessment by staff members of needed services and barriers, multiple interviews, and participation in an open house orientation. Program participants must be Baltimore residents and undergo a criminal background check. However, aspirants do not have to pass an academic test or be able to function at a certain level, because training is tailored to meet their individual academic needs. Approximately 25-30% of participants lack a high school diploma. Once accepted into the program, they agree to adhere to the program's rules and requirements, including passing a drug test, being punctual, keeping good attendance, and dressing appropriately.

The six-week training session takes place at the Malcolm X Youth Center in Baltimore's Park Heights neighborhood from 10 am to 3 pm, five days per week. The training component for out-of-school youth engages 18-21 year-olds in six weeks of career training and individualized employment planning. It also provides a minimum-wage stipend of \$5.15 per hour and a transition period into a paid permanent position at one of the participating hospitals. Topics offered during the training sessions include professionalism in the workplace, CPR/first aid, life skills, computer training, portfolio development, and cultural diversity at work. Participants learn about problem-solving, public speaking, leadership, conflict resolution, and time management. There is an individualized learning environment with six facilitators supporting the participants assigned to a case manager and a job coach. A strict attendance policy holds students accountable for punctuality and absences. They are not paid during the first two weeks of the program, but they do receive a bus pass and food vouchers. HCCA reports that 95% of youth who begin the program make it through all six weeks of training.

Participating youth are assessed through weekly evaluations that include rating attendance and monitoring sobriety. Through this evaluation process, as

well by keeping their own written journals, participants are able to see their own progress. If the staff deems a young person not ready to move beyond the training portion of the program, he or she can be retained beyond the six weeks.

Drawing upon one of the successful elements of the Baltimore Welfare-to-Work model, the Alliance employs career coaches to provide career development. The coaches, full-time hospital staff, are involved with all aspects of the program ranging from the initial interview process to serving as mentors to help participants navigate the passage into full-time employment at a hospital. Each of the three participating hospitals provides a career coach. Assignment to a coach and subsequent employment with a hospital is based on the youth's interest, abilities, and background. Hospitals have access to the youth's required background check and can determine, based on the hospital's hiring practices, whether or not to work with a young person who is on parole.

The hospitals provide training for the participants, and it is the responsibility of the job coaches to let students know what programs, classes, and training are available at each hospital. Examples are the Ladders in Nursing Careers and classes on medical terminology. Through funding provided by the City of Baltimore, JHH provides skills enhancement for full-time hospital employees to support and advance their careers in the healthcare field. The hospital offers GED preparation, an overview of medical terms, and computer basics. Participants of the Alliance may also enroll in these courses.

HCCA is located in the Malcolm X Center because MOED wanted to expand usage through co-locating programs that would offer support services to the community. Other occupants at Malcolm X include the Park Heights Community Health Alliance, Baltimore City Community College GED program, Smart Steps daycare program, Dress for Success Clothing Program, New Pathways Mental Health Services, Career Scope Career Assessment Center, the weekend Peace Arts project, and various prevention and intervention services. It boasts a computer lab open to the community, a recreation room, and a gym/multipurpose room. The Smart Steps program, which offers daycare for children 2-6 years old, allots five slots for Alliance participants. The Center is open from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and the Peace Arts program operates on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Healthcare Career Alliance: A Student Perspective

Before enrolling in the Healthcare Careers Alliance, **Julius** was facing a dead-end, moving job-to-job for four years. He had temporary employment at warehouses in the Inner Harbor earning \$10 an hour and later working at an auto shop for \$8.50 an hour. He was discouraged by the fact that he was being moved around every six months, never with full-time employment. Julius reasoned that adults “don’t trust youth.” Although at age 19 he was supervising older adults and taking on more leadership roles in the workplace, in addition to having earned a high school diploma, he was unable to create a career ladder for himself.

Julius came to Civic Works to learn about opportunities at the Healthcare Careers Alliance. Looking for a career and wanting to go to college, he found that the Alliance could connect him to both. The day of the site visit, Julius was preparing to begin his internship in patient transport at Mount Sinai Hospital. He chose Sinai because it is close to home, and he had a strong relationship with his Career Coach, whom he referred to as his friend.

Julius explained that he “got to know himself through the program” and it put him on the right track to provide for his family. An incentive was knowing that there was “something at the end of the road.” Julius provided positive feedback about the workshop opportunities offered at the Alliance and specifically addressed the benefit of learning more about financial skills, like building assets and buying a home. He also said that he used other services available at the Malcolm X Center and assisted with the youth basketball program. In addition to talking about his individual experience, Julius spoke fondly of his peers, the teamwork aspect of the program, and the support he received from having a shared goal of completing the program with others; four of his peers would also intern at Mount Sinai.

Julius spoke excitedly about the program and how he tells everyone, from friends to strangers on the bus, about the opportunities at the Alliance. He feels as though “not knowing” keeps youth from the program and that not enough youth realize that there are better opportunities available. Recognizing the need for these services and opportunities for other youth in the community, Julius has become an out spoken advocate for the Alliance and has taken steps toward requesting that the Youth Council provide additional funds to support more mentors. Upon completing the program, Julius said he would like to become a mentor because the “program saved my life.”

The Alliance is funded through a \$400,000 annual grant from the Youth Council that is renewable for one year. After the second year, it must again compete for the funding. The participating hospitals provide in-kind services. The full-time job coach positions are funded by the grant, and hospitals are reimbursed by the Alliance.

Fresh Start at Living Classrooms

Established in 1989, Fresh Start is a 40-week program of the private Living Classrooms Foundation that engages male, out-of-school juvenile offenders ages 16-19 in job readiness, academic remediation, and social skills training. All participants are court-involved youth on probation who have a minimum of three arrests. Most Fresh Start participants are referred to the program by the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. According to Gregory Rapisarda, former director of Fresh Start, “We emphasize an

asset-building approach as an alternative to punishment that provides opportunities for young people to contribute and realize their potential through experiential education.”

Fresh Start operates a wood shop at the Living Classroom’s East Harbor Campus, at Baltimore’s Inner Harbor, from 9 am to 4 pm Monday through Thursday and 9 am to 12 pm on Fridays. It enrolls participants who are not employed during program hours and want to obtain their GED, full-time employment, and possibly go to college. Selection for the program is based on two interviews and staff expectations regarding punctuality, commitment, and motivation. Upon entry, Fresh Start participants must sign a contract on program rules that stipulates a zero tolerance policy for violence. Bus fare, often an important factor, is provided for enrolled students. Fresh Start can accept participants from anywhere in Maryland, but most youth are from Baltimore City.

It usually accepts five to eight participants every eight weeks.

The program's current annual capacity is between 35 and 40, but that will increase in the coming year as Living Classrooms expands its campus with the opening of its Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Maritime Park. This facility will be a center for learning about and experiencing the region's fascinating history, which is deeply connected to its maritime past. As the first multicultural heritage tourism and education site on Baltimore's Harbor, the Maritime Park will celebrate African American history, bring the region's maritime past to life, and exemplify a commitment to the education and empowerment of disadvantaged and vulnerable youth.

To assess their educational level, new participants take the TABE and the practice GED. While, the program does not take into account a potential student's grade or academic level for purposes of admissions, Fresh Start does assess the academic standing of students in order to help them prepare for the GED. The average education level of an entering participant is less than 6th grade in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Fresh Start is a 40-week program consisting of five eight-week modules, with students required to participate in a reflective piece at the end of each module. In the first three modules they receive training in carpentry; during the remaining 16 weeks they move into full-time employment in the community. The first three modules (toolbox, production, and boat building) are coupled with one-to-two hours daily of traditional academic learning slanted toward carpentry-based experiential education. The Fresh Start curriculum integrates the academic components of math, science, history, reading, writing, and aspects of the GED with hands-on woodwork. Youth become proficient in general shop safety as

well as hand and power tool safety. Reflecting the strict attendance policy, the first 10 days of modules are mandatory. There are allowances for court dates and three personal days that must be preapproved by staff.

During the last two modules (Work Study and Internship), students work with a Fresh Start Transition Coordinator and a Workforce Development Case Manager to identify a work experience in which they spend 150 hours working with either a for-profit or nonprofit organization. This team provides follow up and support during this transition time and assists participants in developing job and interpersonal skills. Fresh Start engages a variety of stakeholders and partners, including such prestigious organizations as M&T Bank and Northwestern Mutual Financial Network, in order to provide participants with routes to careers.

Fresh Start students earn money during their training through the sale of chairs, planters, boats, and other custom projects they construct during the first three modules. Each young person earns money through the student account, the distribution of which is based on a point system tied to the daily evaluations and self-assessments. Students receive their share of the student account upon completion of the program. When students meet or exceed their weekly point goals, they are eligible to participate in special activities and receive other privileges and incentives. Each of the modules also has nonacademic components, such as obtaining a Maryland State Identification Card, completing service-learning in the community, obtaining a library card, opening an email account, and videotaping a mock job interview. The job readiness elements include developing a resume, obtaining letters of reference, and creating a professional portfolio. In addition to the curriculum for academic and employment preparation, these young people receive training in anger management and coping skills.

Because many participants come to the program with little self-esteem, Fresh Start incorporates projects and activities that instill a sense of accomplishment and demonstrate achievement. Long- and short-term goals are set weekly, and students participate in a daily evaluation in which they grade themselves at the end of the day on a scale of five to negative three in order to assess soft skills, such as cooperation, staying on task, and motivation. Students then meet with their instructor to discuss the rationale for each

"Carpentry was always a hobby of mine, and when I learned about Fresh Start I thought it seemed like a good place to make a difference. Twenty-five years ago I was a kid like them, just without the guns and crack. These city kids have it tough, and I just want to help them straighten up."

—Fresh Start instructor



A double rocker and canoe made by Fresh Start students.

score. The teacher either agrees with the given score or changes it to what she/he thinks is more accurate. Staff members noted that while it is not quantifiable, the participants are taking steps toward honest and thoughtful self-evaluation once they recognize how to assess and think critically about their behavior.

The Fresh Start day opens and closes with a “circle up” in which staff and participants share accomplishments and recognize others. This positive reinforcement creates a sense of community and teamwork. Students also have an opportunity to contribute to, and be recognized in, the Fresh Start Times, a newsletter written for the students, by the students. The Fresh Start Times is an outlet for youth to express themselves and share their experiences and accomplishments. Another unquantifiable change in self-perception occurs when participants are “ready to smile” in their participant photograph that hangs on the walls in the wood shop. The photos include both current enrollees and graduates.

Fresh Start’s personalized learning environment has a staff-to-student ratio of 1:5, and youth work

with the same staff for the duration of the program. For each carpentry module, students will have one instructor/primary case manager and, for the last two modules, students work with the Transition Coordinator. Fresh Start Director Stephanie Region acts as the main tracker of student progress during the program. Students forge close and personal relationships with the staff. One instructor, a retired military officer, describes how he found his way to Fresh Start after attending a benefit for the program: “Carpentry was always a hobby of mine and when I learned about Fresh Start I thought it seemed like a good place to make a difference. Twenty-five years ago I was a kid like them, just without the guns and crack. These city kids have it tough and I just want to help them straighten up.”

One-on-one tutoring by mentors or staff is available nearly every day. Each youth has an Individual Service Plan that is developed and coordinated by students themselves, Fresh Start staff, parole officers, and parents. With reviews every 90 days, the plan addresses student needs and social, academic, and future employment goals. There are eight weeks between cohorts and youth must begin the program at the start of a new cohort. Five to eight students constitute a cohort. There are six Fresh Start full-time staff members.

Fresh Start has a new arrangement with defense contractor Northrop Grumman. Participants may attend a basic wiring course that is mandatory for all new Northrop Grumman employees. The program



A Fresh Start student with his daily evaluation sheet.

involves 80 hours of training and students who complete the course receive an industry-recognized certificate (the “J Standard”). Fresh Start staff transport youth to the Northrop Grumman facility and spend the day with them onsite.

Funding

Fresh Start receives almost half of its funding (\$185,000) from a contract with the Department of Juvenile Services in order to serve 10 to 12 youth per year. The program raises the remainder of funding from corporations and individual supporters, private philanthropic organizations, and other fundraising efforts. The estimated annual cost per student is \$17,500. Although some youth have an Individual Education Plan, Fresh Start is not yet able to access special education funds.

Evidence of Success

Fresh Start has many positive outcomes. Highlights from 2000-2004 include an average 1.6 grade-level increase in writing; 1.8 grade level increase in reading comprehension; 2.0 grade-level increase in math; and a 250-point increase on the Official Practice GED. The average Fresh Start student improves in math, reading, and writing by more than 1.5 grade levels by the end of the 40-week program.

The most impressive Fresh Start statistic is that every participant found employment after graduation. More than half are employed in carpentry and construction. Former participants help Living Classrooms run the Paddleboats in the Inner Harbor, a major tourist destination. Students who receive their GED may also attend a community college or a technical school. Three years after leaving the program, 74% of graduates remain employed or are continuing their education, with only 14% returning to criminal activity. Fresh Start offers free GED classes four times per week for graduates. The National Youth Employment Coalition recognized Fresh Start with a PEPNet Award in 1996 which was subsequently renewed in 2001.

Lessons from Baltimore

There is much to admire in Baltimore’s multifaceted dropout recovery projects and also reason to be concerned. Though individual units operate with what appear to be minimal interference and a lot of solid support from the Mayor’s office, participants’ daily work lives are often laced with seemingly intractable

problems. Parts of the city face all the problems that an entrenched drug culture carries with it. Serious crimes are often committed in the neighborhoods that host youth recovery projects. Dealing with low self-image clients can be disheartening.

Nevertheless, Baltimore demonstrates what can be accomplished when City Hall, in the form of its Mayor’s Office of Employment and Development, backed by federal and local funds, builds and supports a variety of innovative interventions to bring dropouts and other disadvantaged youth into constructive relationships with caring adults.

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CHAPTER 9

Pima County (Tucson), Arizona

- *Innovative arts and horticulture programs combined with GED preparation to form a creative youth employment training program*
- *An employer-backed public relations campaign to heighten community awareness and support of dropout recovery efforts*

Tucson, Arizona's second largest city, with a population of 521,605 (US Census estimate), is located in ethnically diverse Pima County. One-fourth of its families are considered low-income. The unemployment rate for youth ages 16-21 is 45%, and until recently the county had the state's lowest high school graduation rate at only 57%. According to the Tucson Planning Council for the Homeless, Pima County's annual homeless population is 24,000.

Faced with these barriers to success, the county's leadership is committed to helping Tucson's youth understand the value of a high school diploma. A high degree of collaboration among community leaders stresses innovative approaches to dropout recovery. These include programs that focus on vocational, environmental, and artistic skills. City and county government, the school district, alternative schools, and community-based programs have designed both traditional and nontraditional approaches to provide Tucson's young people a second chance for educational and employment success.

The programs described here are the **Pima County One-Stop and Youth Opportunity Center**; the **Metropolitan Education Commission**, which markets the value of a high school diploma; **Las Artes** mural arts project; **YouthWorks**, a community-based agriculture-focused alternative high school; and **Pima County Vocational High School**, a public charter school with a school-to-work curriculum.

Pima County One-Stop and Metropolitan Education Commission

The unique Pima County One-Stop Career Center provides staff, space, and coordination of youth development and employment programming for the county's young people, including vulnerable and out-of-school youth. Its 22 programs offer a variety of services to help people of all ages enter the workforce

and become self-sufficient. The Metropolitan Education Commission (MEC), established in 1990 jointly by the Pima County Board of Supervisors, Tucson's mayor and the City Council, serves as an advocacy organization to identify issues of economic, political, and social importance to children and youth. These two organizations represent the core decision makers who produce policy and programming to reconnect Pima County's out-of-school youth population.

The One-Stop uses federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) dollars to contract with community-based organizations to support the Pima County Youth Service System and its comprehensive menu of youth-centered and youth-led services. The One-Stop also hosts a case management team that stays in touch with young people as they move into adulthood. This team includes representatives from schools, the public housing authority, the juvenile justice system, neighborhood centers, and agencies with experience dealing with gang prevention, homeless youth, teen parents, and youth with disabilities.

One of the benchmarks of the One-Stop is its support of vulnerable youth through an "individual service strategy plan." The plan aims at helping young people improve academically, prepare for work, and acquire occupational skills. A youth services specialist advocates for the young people and convenes experts as needed while maintaining access to service-providers. These specialists are accountable to the Youth Services Director of the One-Stop.

Arnold Palacios, Program Manager of Pima County's Community Services Employment and Training Department, describes the way the agency coordinates the One-Stop services as the "daisy model." Youth are at the center of the flower, with the petals representing individual service strategies for youth, which include such possibilities as summer opportunities, tutoring/dropout prevention, leadership development, skill training, counseling, adult

mentoring, support services, alternative education, and work experience. The One-Stop supports and holds the “daisy” together.

The One-Stop also houses the Pima County Youth Opportunity Center (YO), which is federally funded through June 2006 (See Chapter 19 on the national Youth Opportunity Grant Program). The federal YO grant allowed Pima County youth programs to fund extra staff to support collaboration among systems and, through Palacios’ leadership, requires youth programs to dedicate staff to participate in the One-Stop system. Pima County and associated youth-serving programs have been very successful in engaging key public officials and community leaders in elevating youth issues and implementing a coordinated youth strategy. The YO funds have also helped the One-Stop to engage the media and include youth in the design, implementation, and delivery of services.

With the end of federal funding, the YO program ceased recruiting new students, but continues to support case management staff working with young people at the local community college. The Pima County One-Stop hopes to continue youth development programs after June 2006.

One of the continuing challenges for the One-Stop System—and many like it across the country—is the almost desperate need for dependable financial support. Programs saw the YO funding as a community investment opportunity to develop a youth service delivery system. Palacios said:

In order for youth to move ahead, they need support; but support from federal, state, and local sources has steadily declined since 2001. The service industry is doing well, but to get into the higher-paying positions, youth need training and education in those higher skills. We should plan a mass technical training for youth to improve the future of communities and the state. The workforce has skill gaps. We need systems of support to capture dropouts. This is critical to the county and to the workplace; it has a lot to do with the health of the country.

The Metropolitan Education Commission, established by the Pima County Board of Supervisors and Tucson Mayor and City Council, is an advocacy organization set up to help bring the community together on education issues. Unsurprisingly, it promotes the dictum that all youth should graduate from high school with meaningful educations and

prepared to become productive workers and citizens. All of its activities, program, and collaborations fall under the Goal One: Graduate! Initiative, and they make a large difference in Tucson and Pima County.

Upon learning that Pima County ranked last out of Arizona’s 15 counties in high school graduation rates, Commission members teamed up with the YO program to research the issue and seek solutions. During the spring of 1994, a MEC think tank recommended a long-term campaign to increase Pima County’s high school graduation rates and student academic achievement while reducing dropouts. The MEC adopted this recommendation a few months later, and the Goal One: Graduate! Initiative/Meta Numero Uno: Graduar! was born. During the Goal One campaign’s first year, MEC collected information through numerous forums, hearings, and surveys about issues affecting high school graduation rates, academic achievement, and school dropouts. More than 700 individuals participated, and a team of University of Arizona researchers synthesized this material. The MEC Commissioners then developed the Goal One: Graduate! vision statement and 10 guiding principles.

Goal One: Graduate! is a 27-agency community partnership, including the Pima County Business and Education Roundtable and the Greater Tucson Strategic Partnership for Economic Development. The initiative was supported with federal, city, and county funding, and business and community partnerships. All MEC activities feed into this initiative. The Metropolitan Education Commission shares ideas, programs, and innovative practices. “There is a real caring that comes through from all sides of the table on this Commission,” according to its Executive Director, June Webb-Vignery. In the intervening decade, the graduation rate for Pima County has risen from 57% to 65%.

Goal One: Graduate! was implemented through the help of a community-wide campaign that even included the renaming of a major street running through the middle of Tucson. For one year, the Goal One: Graduate!/Meta Numero Uno: Graduar! Boulevard was on the lips of commuters traveling the city. In addition, 20 area high school graduating classes were saluted through billboards, and a poster competition was launched to encourage youth across the county to take part. Community groups routinely include the pro-graduation message in their communications and programming, which further

raises county-wide awareness of the need to complete school.

In early 2006, the Commission revamped its public relations campaign to encourage more Latino youth to graduate from high school, with strong support from the mayor of Tucson. The campaign includes billboards in English and Spanish to salute the class of 2006; a Youth Leadership Conference sponsored by the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) to emphasize to 5,000 middle and high school students the importance of graduating; Goal One: Graduate! Poster Contest; 30-second TV and radio spots to encourage Latino students to graduate; and a print media campaign including op-ed newspaper columns by Commission members regarding the low Latino graduation rate.

The Goal One: Graduate! initiative also includes several programs to deter youth from dropping out of school:

- **Teen Town Hall**, an annual event at which over 650 youth, including those on suspension and/or facing incarceration, have an opportunity to voice their opinions to community leaders;
- **Goal One: Graduate! Poster Contest**, a competition for youth in Tucson to win a monetary award by designing the winning poster to promote the initiative;
- **Academy Without Walls**, a setting for high school students to receive academic and work-place training in high tech fields for 21st century careers, which brings eight businesses, including Microsoft, together with 22 teachers from 12 high schools and Indian reservations who serve 348 students through one week of training and five weeks of paid internship with the business partners;
- **Outstanding Teen Citizen Awards**, given to 10 youth each year who have overcome barriers, such as dropping out of school, to achieve both academic and social success;
- **The Summer Leadership Conference**, encouraging 600 young people each year to take leadership roles in matters affecting their communities and futures;
- **The Crystal Apple Awards**, honoring individuals and programs doing a great job of giving the children, youth, and adults of Pima County opportunities to enrich their education.

Adding to this list, MEC engages in several intra-agency activities pushing for educational growth and improvement of the quality of life in Metropolitan

Tucson and Pima County, including:

- The School District's **LINKS Initiative (Linking Intervention Network for Kids in School)** is a comprehensive program to reduce violence and alcohol and drug abuse among youth. This is a broad coalition of Pima County school districts, law enforcement agencies, and social services.
- **Dreams Come True GearUp program** promotes higher education for low-income students. In partnership with the University of Arizona's Office of Continuing Education and Academic Outreach, Amphitheater School District, and the University of Arizona's Institute for Children, Youth and Families, Amphitheater students are eligible to participate in a comprehensive five-year program of college readiness.
- **The Key to Employment for the 21st Century Workshop**, in collaboration with community workforce development organizations, provides parents, students, and educators insights into 21st century careers. The MEC's Youth Advisory Council/Tucson Teen Congress provides the Career Fair for the annual LULAC Youth Leadership Conference.
- For students with special needs, the MEC, school districts, and community agencies sponsor **The Transition Fair** to provide youth ages 13-22 with special needs and their parents/guardians, with information about vocational, educational, community living, recreational opportunities, and other services.

The Commission emphasizes youth voice in creating its programming, much of it through the Youth Advisory Council/Tucson Teen Congress (YAC/TCC), an advisory council of public and private middle and high school students that provides MEC and other community-based organizations with opportunities to learn how students view their educational concerns and aspirations. Two youth representatives, chosen by the YAC/TCC, serve on the MEC; there are also youth representatives on the Mayor's School District Action Task Force, League of United Latin American Citizens Youth Leadership Conference Steering Committee, Tucson Resiliency Initiative, the Tucson-Pima Public Library Youth Sub-Committee, and the Tucson Police Department Youth Advisory Committee.

The Commission operates on an annual budget of \$198,119 and nearly all funding comes from the city of Tucson, Pima County, and federal programs.



Left: Staff and students in the Las Artes gallery. Right: These mosaics illustrate the beautiful and intricate work produced by former out-of-school youth at Las Artes.

Las Artes

Las Artes is a community arts program addressing the educational needs of out-of-school youth through GED preparation and, under the guidance of local artists, an opportunity to design and create mosaics that are then placed in and around Tucson. For over a decade, the program has served 80 to 100 16-21-year-olds annually. Unconventional though it may seem, the seemingly curious combination of pre-GED preparation, attention to personal development, and work on mosaics is a continuing success story.

Before admission, students are given the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to identify their reading, math, and language grade levels and the New Century evaluation to measure their strengths and weaknesses and customize an education plan. Once in the program, students retake the TABE and New Century tests to measure academic advancement throughout their GED study period. Students take up to five GED pretests in preparation for the actual exam.

Based on their scores, students are placed into an eight-week module consisting of Basic Education, Las Artes—Mosaic Art, or Basic Education II. The commitment in each module is 30 hours per week. The module series helps build student academic skills toward real-world objectives of gaining a GED and preparing for employment. Las Artes also provides training in money management, first aid, and CPR.

Case managers monitor student progress closely to make sure they are in the appropriate classes for their skill level. Las Artes provides core education classes in a classroom setting with the goal that stu-

dents will receive a GED.

Las Artes students produce murals that decorate walls, bus stops, welcome signs to municipalities, and buildings across the Tucson Metropolitan Area. Other murals are designed as table tops. Murals feature icons, images of Latino heroes such as Cesar Chavez, religious symbols, native animals and plants, trucks, and images of the Southwest. Some murals are epic in size and scope and recount cultural or historic events.

As an incentive to remain in the program, for eight weeks participants receive a weekly stipend of \$75 if they achieve a 90% attendance record each week and pass the TABE at the end of the module. The stipend helps eliminate students' excuses (such as the need to earn money) for missing class. Those who complete the program also receive a monetary bonus. "If you miss three hours in a week you get no check," said Program Manager George Yubeta.

Through Las Artes, youth learn leadership and team-building skills as they progress through their coursework and mosaic projects. Similarly, the program creates a sense of community pride as youth acquire transferable occupational and soft skills that can lead to professional opportunities.

The Las Artes program is administered through the Pima County One-Stop and serves a diverse group of students. Approximately 20% of students who attend have been adjudicated, and 30% are teen parents. The student-to-teacher ratio is 12:1, and each teacher must have a bachelor's degree in the area he or she is teaching or in a related field, and a state certification for teaching adult education.

Funding

Financial backing for Las Artes comes mainly from Pima County general funds and federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds. As many students as possible are qualified for WIA funding; remaining students are funded by Pima County. A Governor's grant of \$59,000 for two years supports the participation of up to 24. Additional funds to support the student stipends, materials, installation, and teaching staff are received from commissions for the murals made by students. The non-academic aspect of Las Artes is also funded by commissions from different municipalities within the area, various County departments, and the Pima County Highway User Fund. "We're very active in getting our government (local and state) to fund youth employment and youth development programs," said Executive Director Art Eckstrom.

Recruitment

Students are recruited by word of mouth among their peers. Las Artes staff also visit juvenile drug court where judges allow them to give a recruitment speech. Community-based organizations, particularly youth centers, also mention the program to youth.

Las Artes is adept at reaching youth who have not previously experienced academic success. The weekly stipend and the artistic nature of the work provide a great deal of motivation, according to two female students. "You get paid to learn and get skills. The people care about us here. This program has been around for a long time. It brings the graduation

rate up, and that makes us all look better," said one student. "The artwork we create is seen all around town. The murals we make are maintained by the city, but we make, frame and mount them ourselves," said another student. When asked what they would be doing if not at the program, students replied, "Sitting at home. But here there is a lot of work to do and we don't want to miss any days." When asked to describe the value of the program, they eagerly responded, "[This is] something we can show our grandchildren. The murals are going to be around for a long time; they're something to be proud of. We feel like we're part of the community. You learn how to work with others."

Las Artes reports that 90% of its students complete the GED preparatory. "We normally have 60 to 70 students every fiscal year. Out of those, 85% obtain their GED, and of those, 80% are either employed or attending postsecondary education," said Yubeta. Youth are ready to leave the program when they have successfully passed the GED and have had an exit interview with their case manager.

Yubeta reports that one of the challenges to completing the program is that parents are not always supportive. Indeed, some students are actually homeless because they have been thrown out of their homes. There is also the issue of youth struggling with their own issues as young parents. Many function at below the 5th grade reading level and require more time to prepare for the GED. Because funding is limited, students who fall below the 5th grade level are referred to Project YES to get up to speed and then they may return to Las Artes. Project YES works with youth functioning at below the 5th grade level and helps bring them up to the levels necessary to participate in various Pima County programs. Las Artes also has an evening program, and students who fail the GED can return to the program for up to 12 hours per week in order to pass the GED.

Las Artes students say that their work and that of their predecessors fills them with pride and a sense of accomplishment. Each mural is a team effort, and they recognize the benefit of working in teams, including teachers and city workers who maintain the works of art and install some of the larger murals. The murals created by students of Las Artes knit a web of beauty that flows through the city, reminding residents and visitors of the pride of the people and the contributions of Tucson's youth.



This artwork, created by Las Artes students, is located at the Tucson Art Museum. It depicts the world "upside down."

YouthWorks

YouthWorks is a small alternative high school accredited by Tucson Unified School District as a community-based alternative education-provider. It is currently applying to the state of Arizona for its own charter. The program serves 15 to 30 students per year and has a service-learning focus on horticulture. Established in 1993, YouthWorks has a staff of three educators, including Executive Director Scott Cordier, who work with vulnerable and out-of-school youth 15-21 years-old. YouthWorks serves a cross-section of adjudicated youth, pregnant and parenting teens, homeless youth, and residents of Native American Reservations. Its job is to help them make the difficult transition back to traditional high schools in Pima County.

Entering the program with an average 4th grade-level reading and math skills, most YouthWorks students require heavy remediation. The school's curriculum combines English language arts, science, mathematics, social studies, physical education, and horticulture with hands-on training in organic gardening, composting, and recycling. The arts are covered through participation in community arts projects designed to restore pride to the decaying inner-city neighborhood that surrounds the school. To complete the school day, students are assigned two hours of homework daily, including 45 minutes of reading.

Learn and Serve America, a federal program of the Corporation for National and Community Ser-

vice, funds a project team at YouthWorks consisting of a project coordinator, staff, parents, students, and community members who participate in a service-learning professional development camp sponsored by the Arizona Department of Education Learn and Serve Office. The team facilitates projects involving up to 100 students, two staff members, and five community members.

YouthWorks relies on service-learning as a methodology¹ throughout its horticulture curriculum. Service-learning provides opportunities to empower youth to help make a difference in their community while offering opportunities to explore career opportunities. The Learn and Serve America groups work with such partners as the Tucson Police Department, City of Tucson Neighborhood Services, Pima County Public Works, Arizona Department of Game and Fish, Job Corps, United Way, Pima County Youth Services, and others. Its projects also involve students from other schools, youth programs, and community partners.

Through the service projects, students develop skills in academic areas, such as problem-solving, arithmetic, research, and oral and written expression. These skills, according to Cordier, are critical to planning and implementing service-learning activities. Among the projects are maintaining a garden plot at school to donate produce to the community food bank; abating graffiti in the community; tutoring and mentoring at Pueblo Gardens Elementary School; and working with kindergarten and 1st grade students to produce a poetry book based on personal experiences with garden care. Whenever possible, the projects are tailored to the interests of the students.

Students who graduate from the school are awarded a traditional high school diploma from YouthWorks, not a GED, and must pass the state-mandated Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS). The school was not designed to grant diplomas, but rather to raise skills and self-esteem, allowing students to return to their traditional school; however, due to student demand for a full high school experience, YouthWorks is currently in the process of obtaining its own charter.

Funding

Tucson Unified School District is YouthWorks' primary funder. The district receives approximately \$55 per day per student from the state and passes roughly \$27 of that to YouthWorks as a vendor. The school



YouthWorks student Diliana Andrade participates in a service-learning project to build literacy at a nearby elementary school called "Poetry in the Garden." (Photo courtesy of YouthWorks)

received \$10,000 of federal funding from Learn and Serve America annually for two years. Through the Pima County One-Stop, the school receives technical assistance for service-learning via a youth development specialist and additional assistance from AmeriCorps members.

YouthWorks also received substantial funding from the now-ended Pima County Youth Opportunity grant. Cordier is searching for alternative funding streams until YouthWorks becomes a public charter school. YouthWorks remains open without the YO funding, in part due to Arizona's Charity Initiative,² which encourages residents to donate to charities and schools in low-income areas. "In light of the sun setting of YO funding, this funding has really helped us out," said Cordier.

Youth Opportunity funding enabled YouthWorks to pay for some students to attend courses at Pima Community College. The school facilitates the dual enrollment registration process at the College, thus advancing the often-difficult passage from high school to postsecondary education. Seniors and a few juniors are eligible to participate in dual enrollment with students able to earn six college credits before they graduate from YouthWorks.

Students are recruited to YouthWorks through word of mouth and referrals from other high schools. There are no tests for entry, but once admitted, students are assessed through a variety of methods, including the TABE to assess reading and language levels. For students admitted to the program, YouthWorks administers the AIMS, which is monitored by the school district.

To register with YouthWorks, a student's parent or guardian must speak directly with Cordier. During the interview process, both parties determine if the school is right for the young person and whether a strong commitment to the program can be maintained. Some students drop out of the program if they do not pass classes, but Cordier attempts to get them into other programs so they do not fall behind. Parents must sign a contract that stipulates they will provide quiet time in the household with adequate lighting for students to read. "Households with several generations of family members living together create a noisy and chaotic environment not conducive to academic work," said Cordier. "One of the last things students hear on their way home from school is, 'Don't forget to read for 45 minutes!' It's part of their homework."



Chris Villanueva and Eric Montes celebrate after graduating from YouthWorks. (Photo courtesy of YouthWorks)

YouthWorks has an 85% graduation rate. Many participants enter the program with low self-esteem, few goals for the future, and little hope of fitting in among students at a traditional high school. Yet, said Cordier, they still want a high school diploma, which most YouthWorks students receive before moving on to college or skilled work. Counseling on goal-setting, careers, and college after high school is year-round so students have a sense of direction along with a plan before graduating. Cordier works with the Pima County One-Stop to secure employment for his students, and YouthWorks staff members work with Pima County Youth Services to expand services in personal development, skills for job readiness, and building careers. The school's mission stresses student self-confidence, civic engagement, and academic proficiency. Regular attendance has not been an issue, said Cordier, but some students do opt to leave. "If I have a student who leaves, they'll go back to the mainstream school, and that is the goal. If they don't want to go back, they can graduate here."

YouthWorks students exert some influence in local politics through their involvement in the Youth Council. Three students became voting members of the Pima County Youth Council and helped put together a Council-sponsored, out-of-school youth summit called "Way to Go." Eleven students took part in hikes and engaged in environmental research with staff from the Sierra Club. Other YouthWorks students helped the University of New Mexico explore the migration of swallows' research, which

was directly linked to learning in class on indigenous birds of the Southwest.

Through YouthWorks' partnership with Pima County Youth Services, students established a strong bond with other local youth who also volunteer on community service projects in the Tucson area. Students worked with their peers in Desert View High School to help motivate and share with them their success with service-learning projects. Among these were mentoring at a local elementary school, reconstructing an abandoned building on the YouthWorks school site, and participating in service-learning training. YouthWorks students also participated in the Governor's Youth Summit, assisted at a county facility for the elderly, worked with another county facility to assist families in need, and became certified in CPR and first aid.

Pima Vocational High School

In 1996, the Pima County Community Resources Department identified a gap between education and employment for high-risk youth, which prompted County leaders to build linkages between employment training programs and youth services. This culminated in the County Board of Supervisors chartering Pima Vocational High School. Its governing board has three school board members from surrounding communities and officials from the juvenile justice sector, Pima Community College, Tucson Police Department, Mayor's Office, and nearby school districts. The school is a publicly-funded, year-round charter school serving out-of-school youth ages 17-21. The school is driven by a school-to-work curriculum and is located on three campuses in Tucson.

In September 2000, Pima Vocational High School opened its doors. Its core objectives are that students earn a high school diploma, experience a variety of workplace environments, develop individual career plans, and find sustainable employment based on newly-acquired workplace skills. The school offers small class sizes and individualized learning plans that embrace teacher-led study, computer-assisted activities, and daily direct work experience.

Students at Pima Vocational spend four hours per day studying academic subjects and two hours on their vocational track. However, they may choose not to participate in the vocational track and to concentrate solely on academics. The academic portion of the curriculum prepares them to pass the AIMS. The school calendar is divided into six-week sessions

which students may enter at the beginning of any cycle after completing a three-day orientation. All classes use direct instruction assisted by computer instruction and have competency-based credit accrual. Students have individualized education plans, and courses are taught in a small-class environment enabling young people to gain confidence in an academic environment. The school has found that students respond positively to the six-week structure of the school. "At the end of six weeks students have some credits to show for their work, which really helps keep up their motivation," according to School Director Gloria Proo.

The vocational element of the program centers on three modules that gear classroom instruction to work experience. Each consists of six weeks of classroom instruction followed by six weeks of employment training. The school's year-long curriculum is based upon the Arizona Workplace Academic Skills, which calls for students to complete a study of 15 major areas necessary for employment, such as time management, communications, and interpersonal skills. Students complete work-related experiences that in the beginning of the curriculum introduce them to, and then later immerse them in, the world of work. A work plan is created for each student for one to four years with short-, medium-, and long-range goals instead of identifying students by grade levels. Students are counseled on the actual cost and availability of education or training for their chosen career. They are also expected to compile a portfolio of evaluation reviews from employers, an example of a cover letter, a completed application, resume, letters of recommendation, certificates and awards, and a career plan with short- to long-range goals.

In Module I, students learn the importance of soft skills, such as attitude, behavior, cooperation, language, and dress. To move onto placement in a work crew, they must reach 70% evaluated competency in each of the skills. If a student does not meet this level, the school works with him or her to raise skill levels before placement at a worksite. Once on the work crew, students rotate through four to six sites and are asked to demonstrate their understanding of the work skills learned in the classroom. A Crew Coach works with those who need extra assistance or have had very limited work experience.

In the Module II class, students learn to write a resume and thank-you letters. They also learn how to fill out a job application and answer com-

monly-asked interview questions. Students engage in activities that bring these documents to life, such as a mock employment interview, and they are videotaped to critique and improve their performance. Once they have completed Module II, they move on to job-shadowing with various agencies in Pima County.

The Module III class works on careers. They discuss the concepts of career ladders, workplace responsibilities and attitude, as well as the possibilities of receiving training they would need for various specialties. They then interview for internships. Those who need additional help can continue with the work crew or in job-shadowing. At this stage, Pima Vocational's staff members work with students on how to deal with issues that come up in the workplace.

Pima Vocational does not have a rigid curriculum, and this gives students the flexibility to spend longer periods of time in work placements if they or their supervisors believe it to be beneficial. "Some students may be in placement for 12 weeks. It is a mutual decision between the student, mentor, and teacher to decide if the student has mastered the skills in the placement. We don't have a fail grade at Pima Vocational, and there is no stigma attached to spending a longer period of time in placement," said Proo.

Pima Vocational employs case workers to provide wrap-around services for students to deal with their outside issues. Thirty percent of Pima Vocational students are adjudicated youth, 25% are teen parents, 30% require special education, and 55% have at one time been homeless. Students are also referred to other youth service programs such as Youth on Their Own (YOTO).

Students who complete the 8th grade in traditional schools may apply to attend Pima Vocational after participating in a three-day orientation to see if they and the school are a good match. "We interact with youth in a collaborative manner. We see them as a partner in their learning," added Proo. By building mutual respect, the Pima Vocational staff aims to lower the walls of distrust that some young people throw up to protect themselves from adults. "We work through issues with them, and they find that for the program to work, they must work with adults," said Proo. The school recruits youth through word of mouth, late-night radio advertisements, and advertisements on buses.

Students take the TABE before they enter and

again when they graduate. The school also uses the New Century Assessment Program to identify students' grade-level equivalent for math and reading. For students who progress rapidly, early graduation is a possibility.

Students are expected to adhere to three main rules. They must call school if they cannot attend, openly communicate with teachers and administrative staff, and relate to everyone around them. "We want them to talk about their problems so we can start a plan to make things better," said Proo. The school's priority, she said, is to teach students social skills and respectful ways of dealing with others. Since the school considers communication to be the center of its model, potential employees are directly asked if they like young people and feel comfortable interacting with them.

Students are removed from Pima Vocational if they exhibit violent behavior or are found to possess illegal substances. The school has had only one incident of expulsion in five years. Asking students to leave Pima Vocational does not mean that they will not be given additional opportunities to return to their studies. "If a student leaves the school, a youth specialist stays in contact and will work to help them get through troubled times and back to school. We've had kids graduating now who had to come back five times," said Proo.

Pima Vocational's budget is a typical patchwork of funding from a variety of sources. In early 2006, the school was not yet at attendance capacity and was serving approximately 50 students at each of two sites and 22 at the third site. With a staff-to-student ratio of 1:3, because Pima Vocational students require smaller classes for academic success, thereby increasing the need for skilled staff, the largest portion of the budget is staff salaries. The school strives to keep the student-to-staff ratio low in order to maintain close contact with students. It would be nice, suggested some staff, if vocational funding were flexible enough to pay for training for soft skills and apprenticeships, as in the federal Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act. "We don't want it to be for specific careers because that makes the training too stiff. The funding would be more useful if it also covered professional training for teachers so we can keep staff updated on the latest information," said one staffer.

The school's annual operating budget is \$800,000 with student costs of approximately

\$7,000. Funding comes mainly from state grants and federal ESEA grant Titles I, II, and IV. The state per-pupil allotment is roughly \$4,000 to \$5,000. The County contributes free rent for two of the office buildings on the school's campus, stipend dollars to pay for students who are working, and one-to-two full-time staff.

Pima Vocational High School has, in its existence, graduated 287 young people, and an average of 70% of Pima students complete the curriculum. Still, leaders at Pima Vocational wrestle with multiple barriers to success. First, traditional area trade schools perceive the school as competition. Youth who attend Pima Vocational are nontraditional students, and more than half have at one time been homeless, making it difficult to hold onto the state-allotted per-pupil funding. A large chunk of the school's funding goes to support the stipends of students who are working while in the vocational program, a drain on funding that traditional schools do not normally experience. Finally, the typical school week consists of classroom time and 10 to 20 hours of work experience. This makes workplace mentoring highly important, but it is often difficult to find suitable professionals in the work place to mentor students.

Lessons from Pima County

According to Arnold Palacios, program manager of the Community Services Employment & Training Department of the Pima County One-Stop, a large factor contributing to Tucson's large out-of-school youth population is young people's desire to help support their families. Another factor in the equation is that as youth fall behind they do not wish to stay in school due to a mis-placed sense of pride. Said Palacios:

They are embarrassed and say they must work to help their family. The youth who need the most help get the least; they need help to acquire more skills, but have a greater need to connect with a caring adult. Usually, a large workforce development system does not have the capacity to offer this kind of counseling; it isn't set up to deliver this type of individualized service which takes a considerable amount of resources, time, commitment and funding. We're trying to change that.

Pima County is working collaboratively to recapture its dropouts. Centralized programming through the One-Stop and the marketing campaign of the Met-

ropolitan Education Commission have increased the numbers of graduating students and provided opportunities for those who left the traditional system. Las Artes, YouthWorks, and Pima Vocational High School provide varying opportunities to spark young people's interest in education and occupational skills and reconnect the area's dropouts to ensure greater success in adulthood.

In most respects, the dropout recovery picture in Pima County, conforms to the by-now customary image of problem-plagued youth being guided by qualified, profoundly caring specialists from public or nonprofit agencies collaborating with the public school system. What alters this image somewhat are two departures from the norm: (1) strong evidence that the area's corporate and nonprofit sectors consider themselves vital parts of the process and are willing to publicize their powerful support, and (2) programs unique to this site that blend the accepted features of most recovery efforts, especially those that prepare young people for the GED and all that goes with reconnecting with mainstream society, with vocational training and placement in unusual, but such highly popular specialties as mosaic art and horticulture.

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¹ The American Youth Policy Forum has published two reports on service-learning with a detailed description of the methodology. See *Finding Common Ground: Service-Learning and Education Reform* (2002) and *Restoring the Balance Between Academics and Civic Engagement in Public Schools* (2005).

² The Helping the Working Poor Fund was established by the Arizona State Legislature to provide services, such as medical care, child care, food, clothing, shelter, and basic needs for employed families struggling to make ends meet. To encourage charitable contributions to this fund, the Legislature allows most donors to take up to \$200 off their taxes in the form of a tax credit.

CHAPTER 10

Camden, New Jersey: The Work Group's New Jersey Youth Corps

■ *An education and job-readiness program for out-of-school youth with a strong emphasis on youth development*

The City of Camden, located across the Delaware River from Philadelphia, has a population of just under 80,000. Rated as “America’s Most Dangerous City” in 2004, Camden has become a sad example of the afflictions that can beset a one-time commercial and industrial center which, like so many others, suffers from abnormally high rates of poverty and unemployment.

It is proving to be a very tough struggle, but there are reasons for hope. While acknowledging Camden’s plight, City Councilman Ali-Sloan-El sees a way out in providing “jobs, training, and opportunity.” One source of hope is a small but quite comprehensive program of youth development that is helping to make a large difference in the daily lives and work futures of hundreds of young people who once epitomized the sheer hopelessness of life in Camden.

Camden’s troubling statistics echo the sad refrain of much of urban America. According to the 2000 US Census, 4,838 of its residents age 18-24 (51% of the age cohort) and 20,929 residents ages 25 and older (49%) lack high school diplomas, while 11% of the adult population never entered high school.

To address some of Camden’s worst problems, a consortium of 13 public and private local social service agencies formed The Work Group in 1983. A year later it became a site for the New Jersey Youth Corps of Camden County. (See Chapter 18 for further information on the national Youth Corps model.) This popular program, the only full-time GED program with wraparound services, serves only about 100 students every year, a tiny fraction of Camden’s out-of-school youth population. Yet, it has become a model of how a youth corps program can succeed in a distressed community. That the Camden community could use many more “slots” at The Work Group goes without saying.

The Work Group’s New Jersey Youth Corps, a voluntary education and job-training program for youth 16-25 years old who have dropped out of school, is part of the 13-site statewide New Jersey Youth Corps. Unlike many analogous programs, it places heavy emphasis on its Corpsmembers becoming self-directed, self-sufficient individuals who are productive and responsible members of their families and communities. In addition to equipping them with appropriate skills and education, it helps Corpsmembers connect with the staff, each other, and themselves to bring about positive changes, building confidence, experiencing accomplishment, and connecting with caring adults in a supportive environment.

The intensive nine-month program is a rigorous experience—a full-time combination of academic subjects leading to a GED, work experience through community service, training for work readiness, and counseling in career development. The first nine months of the program are on-site. After graduation from this first stage, participants enter the second stage, a 12-month period during which they are closely monitored and supported while they develop their career and educational plans with continued support from The Work Group staff.

Program Structure

There are no official referrals into the program; young people learn about the corps, refer themselves and arrange for an orientation to the program’s operations and high expectations. Participants are evaluated and must demonstrate a 6th grade reading level.

“We don’t change students, but create a place that is safe and supportive for students to find strengths in themselves.”

—Lori Godorov, Executive Director of The Work Group

For every accepted applicant, four qualified young people are turned away (due to funding constraints) and referred to the few alternatives in Camden.

The first five-week selection period consists of an initial group bonding and program orientation that serves as a probationary period. This allows the staff to evaluate participants' commitment to the program based upon motivation and attitude. This segment, called "101," focuses on personal exploration, breaking down barriers, and creating a positive, peer-based support group. Students decide on the focus of community service projects they will undertake and are responsible for organizing and completing them. Some students might choose to leave on their own during this stage, but The Work Group never adds new members to the group. During this comprehensive selection process, out of an initial group of 28 young people, only 13 to 16 participants typically continue with the program. Those who do not complete 101 are encouraged to return and try again. Said Executive Director Lori Godorov, "We don't change students but create a place that is safe and supportive for students to find strengths in themselves." Godorov believes strongly that this initial period, which emphasizes self-awareness and readiness to move forward, is crucial to the ultimate success of the program.

The Work Group uses a one-room school house approach. Groups that begin together in 101 stay together. The goal is to build a positive, peer-based

alternative support system that will get students through the program and beyond. This model makes possible a strong group counseling approach. In fact, during the initial five weeks of the program, students are engaged in no academics and no work experiences. Time is devoted entirely to group formation and relationship building. This is the foundation, said Godorov, that makes everything else possible. "Without that piece," she noted, "We would be just another GED program."

Upon completion of 101, Corpsmembers are officially and ceremoniously inducted into the Youth Corps to continue their education and training through three seven-week modules. During these modules, participants spend two days per week in academic and career development classes, two days engaging in community service, and one-half day, usually Friday, taking a culturally-oriented field trip. A daily academic schedule consists of classes meeting from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., with group instruction complemented by DESTINATIONS, a computer-aided GED preparation program. From 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. students attend a career development class using the Atkins Curriculum developed at Columbia University, which focuses on dignifying the student and guiding his/her process of choosing, finding, getting, and keeping a job. Students participate in a video-taped student-teacher conference between each module where they review their progress, discuss challenges, and set goals for the coming weeks.

Community service and worksite projects have two purposes. First, they serve to engage students in contributing positively to their community, a new experience for many Corpsmembers. Each group conducts a community assessment, which serves as the basis for developing community improvement projects to be carried out by the group. Some improvement projects selected in 2005 include: mentoring school-aged children, rehabilitating a homeless shelter, beautifying public spaces, improving the grounds of a rundown soccer league, building a community garden to provide fresh vegetables to city residents, building a community bread oven, volunteering at a juvenile detention center, creating murals in the community, and renovating a dilapidated neighborhood park.

The second goal of the community service and worksite experiences is to give Corpsmembers the opportunity to learn, practice, and master the skills necessary to go to work. Most students come to



The Work Group Director Lori Godorov addresses Corpsmembers upon their induction into the Youth Corps. (Photo courtesy of The Work Group)

The Work Group with little or no work experience. Worksites are used as simulated work, with Corpsmembers working in crews of six to eight under the direction of a Work Group staff member. General workplace skills, such as showing up on time, following directions, seeing a task through to completion, and working appropriately with co-workers are emphasized. At the end of each day Corpsmembers rate themselves and then are rated by staff on 14 work readiness skill targets. This serves as a point of immediate reflection and feedback on work readiness skills.

Upon completion of the Youth Corps modules there is another ceremony called “Welcome to the World of Work” in which students complete their commitment to attend The Work Group daily and begin the last phase of the program. At this ceremony, students receive a portfolio, resume, letters of recommendation, and interview clothing, along with a commitment of support from The Work Group. In the final module, students complete the academic component (they have passed the GED exam and earned the New Jersey State High School Diploma) and community service requirements of the program. During this phase, they are mentored as they begin their careers, and develop further education and life plans. Program graduates are supported through a 12-month transition period that includes structured support services, such as regularly scheduled check-ins, on-site job retention support, counseling, employee/employer intervention, retention incentives, financial assistance for uniforms, first night phone calls to share the excitement of a first day at work, school books, eye glasses, reemployment assistance, postsecondary education planning, and support and continuing access to career counselors and case managers. There are five entering classes a year. Corpsmembers are paid a living stipend of \$75.75 per week for their participation.

Youth Development Practices

At the core of The Work Group’s programming lies a dedication to positive youth development by encouraging constructive support from peers, family, and the network created by the Corpsmembers. The program is based heavily on developing group support to encourage and accelerate individual growth. Opportunities for peer interaction and support are regularly scheduled, beginning with intensive group-building exercises. These include having Corpsmem-



The Work Group graduates in caps and gowns. (Photo courtesy of The Work Group)

bers design their own space and set up the physical layout of their classroom, and continuing with daily group-building experiences throughout the program. In addition to tools such as uniforms, Corps membership/induction ceremonies and community meetings, The Work Group uses other special events and counseling sessions to form strong group identity and trust. For example, each June there is a formal cap and gown graduation with more than 250 friends and family members in attendance.

The Work Group subscribes to a “do with rather than do for” approach, helping Corpsmembers learn the process of how to make good choices while building character and confidence in their ability to care for themselves. Much effort is put into individual development so that Corpsmembers become principled, honest, trustworthy, empathetic and focused, part of the process of helping Corpsmembers develop a new self image.

The Work Group attempts to create and maintain relationships with those involved in its students’ lives, such as family members, friends and clergy. The program uses home visits, telephone and in-person conferences, ceremonies celebrating student accomplishments, and an atmosphere encouraging students to include people significant in their lives in program activities.

Youth Corps Population

Youth Corps participants must reside in Camden County, and 90% live in the City of Camden. The

current group is approximately half African American and half Latino and is evenly split by gender. Seventy-seven percent of Corpsmembers are under the age of 20 and the average is 18 years. Forty percent are teen parents, 33% have been involved in the justice system, and 30% dropped out before reaching high school. A growing number (now 50%) are involved with the New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services, and many are making transitions from the foster care system. All are low-income and face significant barriers, such as homelessness. Most have not been involved with formal education for at least two years and one-half already have an affiliation with another case manager through the justice system, foster care, or other programs.

Students Describe the New Jersey Youth Corps Program at the Work Group

“The Work Group filled a hole in my life when I needed it most; I had been locked up from age 13 to 21. They rebuilt me as a person by giving me the tools to rebuild myself. How many programs do you know that have academics, worksite experiences, career development—all that with counseling? It makes you a balanced person. This program has been life-altering for me.”

—Will Adkins, age 23

“This program is more like a family, not just a school. I came here with nothing. I had two kids by the age of 17 and was not doing anything with myself. The Work Group helps a lot of people from Camden who are not interested in school and are doing nothing but hanging on the corner selling drugs.”

—Diane Thach, 19

“Because of The Work Group I was able to get my GED and enroll at Rowan University as a Secondary Education major. The Work Group gives a person a second chance and prevents them from getting into trouble.”

—Marie Bosch, 19

“The Work Group has taught me how to manage money, prepare for the GED, help our community, and how to be more responsible in the choices I make for myself. I am determined to pass the GED and make my dream come true.”

—Nikita Cooks, 16

Funding

The Work Group is almost entirely dependent on federal and state dollars complemented by well-intentioned but sparse private foundation funding. Past funding came from the federal Job Training Partnership Act, now the Workforce Investment Act (\$400,000 in 2005, an all-time low), and New Jersey Youth Corps funding overseen by the New Jersey Department of Labor (\$325,000 per site). The total operating budget of The Work Group in FY 2005 was \$1,200,000.

Program Success

The Work Group proudly reports that it does no recruiting but, regrettably, must turn away many young people. Those who have gone through the program maintain connections with the staff well beyond their direct participation in the program.

The Work Group is undergirded by the premise that all individuals have the capacity and the right to achieve their potential, as well as the responsibility to care for themselves and their families. While the program works with Corpsmembers to achieve short-term goals, such as a GED or a job, it stresses long-term goals of bringing about fundamental changes in the students’ approach to work, learning, and problem-solving.

The New Jersey Corps of Camden serves approximately 100 Camden County youth each year. Of these, 85% complete the nine-month intensive program and 87% of the graduates are placed in jobs or postsecondary education and training. One-third of Work Group students complete their GED while in the program. Although one-third of Corps members are on probation or parole at the time of their entry into the program, fewer than 16% are reincarcerated during the program or in the year immediately thereafter. On average, The Work Group’s Youth Corps provides more than 10,000 hours of community service each year. In 2004, 44% of Corpsmembers participated in some form of postsecondary education within 12 months of completing the on-site portion of the program.

Plaudits from outside come regularly to the Work Group, which has twice been recognized by the US Department of Labor and the National Youth Employment Coalition as a PEPNet Awardee, in 1996 and again in 2001. In 2001, the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps awarded “Excellence in Corps Operations” status to The Work Group.

Focus on Youth Development

The Work Group effort in Camden is a valiant, successful, attempt to infuse the broad area of dropout recovery with a central animating feature: a powerful emphasis on developing human character. While demanding a strong attachment to the traditional features of youth development (job training, academic attainment, and gainful employment, among others), The Work Group operates on the assumption that its Corpsmembers can meet and surpass the customary objectives of most recovery programs by becoming genuinely self-respecting, family-oriented, community-minded citizens of sterling character with strong evidence of leadership potential.

This is a tall order for anyone, let alone young people who have already experienced many of life's manifold disappointments. Its record to date suggests that the Work Group's Youth Corps model merits stable financial, organizational, and political backing, and a chance to apply the very considerable knowledge and experience it has acquired to helping dropouts in other needy areas.

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CHAPTER 11

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

- *Encouraged by special state legislation, an expansive view of public education spurs innovative reconnection efforts, by both public and nonprofit partners*

Like nearly all American cities its size (a population estimated at 583,624 in 2004), Milwaukee is bedeviled by most of the urban ills of our times. In addressing them, though, this manufacturing and services center possesses a unique heritage: a readiness to deal with its social problems, both creatively and sympathetically. Indeed, Robert M. LaFollette Sr. and several succeeding generations of legislators helped to cement Wisconsin's reputation as a socially responsible and leading-edge innovator. In recent years, educators, politicians, education advocates, and civil servants have experimented with new ways to help Milwaukee's dropouts and other vulnerable youth become part of the city's wage-earning, tax-paying middle class.

It helps to begin with the State Legislature's definition of alternative routes to meeting the needs of youth no longer succeeding in traditional schools and to examine how Milwaukee has been able, since 1985, to make this state legislation work for young people and, in the process, help to redefine and broaden what is meant by "public education."

Wisconsin State Policy

The Legislature's definition of alternative education reads:

"Alternative education program" means an instructional program, approved by the school board, that utilizes successful alternative or adaptive school structures and teaching techniques and that is incorporated into existing, traditional classrooms or regularly scheduled curricular programs or that is offered in place of regularly scheduled curricular programs... "Alternative educational program" does not include a private school or a home-based private educational program. —Chapter (PI) (44.02)

Since 1985, public school boards in Wisconsin must identify and serve students who meet the statutory definition of being at risk failing to graduate from high school. Under the *Children At Risk of Not*

Graduating from High School statute (CAR), children at risk are defined as pupils in Grades 5-12 who are at risk of failing to graduate from high school because they are dropouts or are two or more of the following: (under §118.153 (1), Wis. Stats.)

- one or more years behind their age group in the number of credits attained,
- two or more years behind their age group in basic skill levels,
- habitual truants, as defined in §118.16(1)(a),
- parents, adjudicated delinquents, or
- 8th grade pupils whose score in each subject area on the state-approved examination was below the basic level or who failed to be promoted to the 9th grade.

Every August, a school board that qualifies for and applies for "bonus aid" must submit a report to the Department of Public Instruction specifying how it will meet the needs of students at risk of failing to graduate. This categorical aid reimbursement program makes funding available to districts with high numbers of dropouts and is used to fund specialized services for vulnerable youth. The statute has been level-funded for the last nine years at \$3.5 annually, of which Milwaukee currently receives \$1.9 million. Twenty-six other school districts have received funds in recent years.

Reimbursement for each pupil is based on meeting at least three of the following objectives:

- The pupil's attendance rate was at least 70%.
- The pupil remained enrolled in school.
- The pupil, if a high school senior, received a high school diploma or passed the state-approved high school graduation test.
- The pupil earned at least 4.5 academic credits or a prorated number of credits if he or she was enrolled for less than the entire school year, and the pupil demonstrated, on standardized tests or other appropriate measures, gains in reading and mathematics commensurate with the duration of his or her enrollment.

Wisconsin’s charter school legislation adds to the options available to youth in the state. Charter schools receive funding through the district and, in many districts, can access 100% of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funding. When none of the funding based on ADA is retained by the district and there are no in-kind administrative services provided, the charter schools must purchase all administrative services. In Wisconsin, two-thirds of K-12 public education funds are raised, mostly through state sales tax and state income tax, and the remaining one-third comes from such other sources as property taxes, federal aid, and local fees.

Charter schools not authorized by school districts cannot levy local property taxes. The amount of funding that a charter school in partnership with Milwaukee Public Schools receives is determined in the charter or contract. The district monitors enrollment on a weekly basis, and seats must be filled by the third Friday in September and the second Friday in January for the fall and spring semesters, respectively. Schools are subject to a yearly performance rating and a review panel. Under Wisconsin charter school law, all faculty must be certified, although provisional teachers and special licenses for charter school faculty can be obtained by noncertified teachers.

Milwaukee Policy

Milwaukee has a multi-layered and expansive concept of public education with entities that operate with, in partnership with, and outside the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). The city has the oldest publicly-supported voucher program in the nation, the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), as well as several different kinds of public schools, as depicted in the table below.

In short, public education, as a broadly-defined

concept, is supported by tax-generated revenues. Public schools may be operated directly by MPS or by a school supported by a contract with a public authorizing board, as described below.

Partnership Schools

Partnership Schools were first developed after enactment of the Children at Risk Wisconsin state statute in 1985. Although they have been permitted statewide for 20 years, only Milwaukee has used this option. Currently, there are 19 Partnership Schools working with MPS. Their funding comes from the state’s Children at Risk statute and local district sources. Generally, the local school board develops a Request for Proposals and agencies and then competes for funding. Nonprofit agencies enter into a contract with MPS and are provided 80% of the per pupil cost. The remaining 20% covers administrative and other services for the school. MPS contracts for a specific number of student slots per year and then sets the funding level. MPS provides multiple-year contracts for high-performing schools, typically three years for Partnership Schools. To determine eligibility for “at-risk status,” students must complete an Alternative Program Application Form with parental permission. Partnership Schools are subject to all federal and state guidelines under the No Child Left Behind Act, but with some flexibility.

Charter Schools

Milwaukee uses a multilevel classification system for charter schools. If a charter school is an “instrumentality,” it is part of MPS and faculty are under contract with MPS. A “non-instrumentality” charter school is run by a private, nonprofit organization sponsored by MPS. School faculty are employed only by the nonprofit, not by MPS. (For example,

Inside Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS)	In Partnership with MPS	Outside MPS (Independent Charters)
Instrumentality Charters	Contract Schools	City Charters
Innovative Options Schools	Non-Instrumentality Charters	University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee Charter
Traditional Schools	Partnership Schools	Milwaukee Area Technical College Charter
		MPCP Voucher Program for students to attend private schools

The CITIES Project High School, discussed below, is a non-instrumentality charter school whose faculty is employed by the community-based TransCenter.) “Independent charter schools” operate outside of MPS and are sponsored by other authorizers in Milwaukee. Over the past 20 years, Wisconsin charter school law has gone through many changes that have expanded options for developing additional charter schools. Charter schools sponsored by MPS have five-year contracts.

In addition to charters granted by MPS, there are three other charter-granting authorities in Milwaukee: Milwaukee Area Technical College, the City of Milwaukee, and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Each of these has a separate process for applying for a charter, which is unique to Milwaukee and allows schools to negotiate with different chartering authorities and essentially act as free agents. The case of **TransCenter for Youth** demonstrates how a community-based organization can serve out-of-school youth in Milwaukee by using a variety of state and local avenues.

TransCenter for Youth

TransCenter has been working since 1969 with dropouts and youth at risk of dropping out from traditional Milwaukee high schools. In 1973, it became a nonprofit organization and opened its first school, Shalom High School. TransCenter applied for a charter school and was accepted by all three chartering entities. It opted to work with MPS and since the early 1980s the relationship with MPS has broadened the vision and meaning of public education in Milwaukee.

TransCenter currently operates one charter school, **The CITIES Project High School (CPHS)**, and three Partnership Schools: **Shalom High School**, **Northwest Opportunities Vocational Academy (NOVA)**, and **El Puente High School for Science, Math, and Technology**. TransCenter also runs the **Technical Assistance & Leadership Center (TALC New Vision)**, which administers a five-year grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support the creation of 50 small high schools in Milwaukee.

Although TransCenter schools have their distinct approaches to engaging youth in educational programming, they share certain basic characteristics. To maintain a personalized environment, the schools are capped at 100 students, who each choose a staff

person to act as a counselor. Each school integrates experiential education and project-based learning opportunities where students demonstrate, in a hands-on fashion, how to use their knowledge. To graduate and receive a high school diploma from Shalom High School, for example, students must earn 22 credits and demonstrate mastery of 300 core skills. All TransCenter schools work to implement the MPS K-12 curriculum’s teaching and learning goals. There are waiting lists at TransCenter Schools and applications are considered on the basis of available openings during the school year. Shalom has 263 applicants on a waiting list, while NOVA has 54 and El Puente has 53. TransCenter schools maintain at least a 70% attendance rate. Through March 2005, the attendance rates were 81, 92, 85, and 77% for Shalom, NOVA High, NOVA Middle, and El Puente, respectively.

Shalom High School

Shalom High School opened in 1973 as a private school for youth referred by the juvenile court system. It became a public school in 1985 when it began contracting with MPS and receiving public funding. Shalom was in some ways a “prototype charter school” run by TransCenter, a private nonprofit organization, and contracted with MPS, thus predating Wisconsin’s charter school law that was enacted in 1993. With the CAR statute effectively authorizing it, TransCenter was able to utilize public funding, and it became a Partnership School, one designed to serve youth who meet the state-defined at-risk crite-



Shalom students learn inside and outside the school’s walls. (Photo courtesy of TransCenter)

ria. Faculty at Partnership Schools are not required to be certified, but most faculty at the TransCenter Schools are state-certified teachers. Those not certified must be supervised by a certified teacher. TransCenter provides some financial support for noncertified faculty to become certified.

Shalom High serves youth ages 15-19 in Grades 9-12. Its full-day program provides an opportunity for students meeting the CAR criteria to earn a high school diploma under an accelerated model in which students can graduate in two-and-one-half to three years. The school uses a competency-based, credit-earning model in addition to awarding credits for course work. Students in their senior year must show competency through portfolio demonstrations in front of review panels made up of individuals from the community.

Shalom High School SY 2004-2005 Demographics

- Enrollment: 101 students
- 40% male, 60% females
- 97% African American, 3% other
- Age range: 15-19 years old
- 9% former dropouts (upon entry)
- 98% erratic attendance/habitually truant (upon entry)
- 100% severely credit-deficient; not meeting or exceeding state benchmarks or standards; behind age group in basic skills
- 18% pregnant/parents
- 15% adjudicated delinquents/youth offenders/court-involved
- 81% qualify for free/reduced lunch

Other TransCenter Programs

TransCenter's other two Partnership Schools also serve youth meeting the CAR criteria. Northwest Opportunities Vocational Academy (NOVA) offers 45 youth in Grades 7 and 8 and 55 in Grades 9-12 a school-to-work transition program that enables them to participate in internships and gain social skills for



Team-Teaching in El Puente's integrated curriculum (Photo courtesy of TransCenter)

the workplace. NOVA staff also serve as advisors to small groups of students.

Founded in 1997, El Puente High School for Science, Math, and Technology enrolls youth ages 14-20 in Grades 9-12. It employs an interdisciplinary model focusing on math and science and project-based learning activities. Students typically attend El Puente for three to four years.

Established in Fall 2004, The CITIES Project High School is an open enrollment charter school sponsored by MPS that helps students become active learners and change-agents in their communities. The curriculum focuses on experiential education, project-based learning, public work, and community rebuilding. Current CPHS students are in Grades 9 and 10, although the school will expand in two years to a maximum of 100 students in Grades 9-12. The entire faculty at CPHS has to be certified, but teachers can obtain provisional licenses and special licenses for charter schools.

There is much interest in dual enrollment options in Milwaukee. Although TransCenter does not operate the Early College model, its schools link with the local technical college to expand educational options for its students. Students may earn an associate's degree and dual credit at the local technical college. Fundraising efforts provide tuition scholarship support for students interested in this option.

Demographics of TransCenter for Youth Schools in SY 2004-2005

Northwest Opportunities Vocational Academy (NOVA)

- Enrollment: 100
- NOVA Middle School (45 students):
 - 58% male, 42% female
 - 93% African American, 2% Hispanic, 2% Native American, 2% Other
- NOVA High School (55 students):
 - 56% male, 44% female
 - 80% African American, 11% White, 5% other, 2% Asian, 2% Native American
- Age range: 13-19 years old
- 0% dropouts (upon entry)
- 1% expelled (upon entry)
- 100% erratic attendance/habitually truant (upon entry)
- 97% severely credit deficient; not meeting or exceeding state benchmarks or standards; behind age group in basic skills
- 1% parents/pregnant
- 1% adjudicated delinquents/youth offenders
- 8% previously court-involved
- 82% qualify for free/reduced lunch
- 6% foster youth

El Puente High School

- Enrollment: 105
- 50% male, 50% female
- 55% Hispanic, 22% African American, 18% White, 4% Native American, 1% Asian
- Age range: 14-20 years
- 0% dropouts (upon entry)
- 86% erratic attendance/habitually truant (upon entry)
- 83% severely credit deficient; not meeting or exceeding state benchmarks or standards; behind age group in basic skills
- 22% parents/pregnant
- 78% qualify for free/reduced lunch

The CITIES Project High School (CPHS)

- Opened in fall 2004 and only limited information is available.
- Enrollment: 63
- 52% male, 48% female
- 81% African American, 9% White, 8% Native American, 2% Asian

Funding

TransCenter schools are primarily supported by state and local shares of ADA funding. Each of three Partnership Schools receives approximately \$7,305 per student per year in ADA funding plus 20% for in-kind support services, such as administration, transportation, some social worker time and counseling services, nutritional services, and lunch programs. Non-instrumentality charter schools receive approximately \$7,111. The estimated actual cost per student per year for FY 2005 is \$11,000.

Milwaukee's multilayered system of public education has different requirements and funding provisions for each type of education entity. The three Partnership Schools that TransCenter operates receive 80% of the average per pupil cost of the district from MPS on a two-year delayed funding schedule. Initial funding for TransCenter is provided by private sources for the three Partnership Schools. Facilities for Partnership Schools are not provided by MPS, but the District does provide student transportation. The MPS contract (including the in-kind services) covers 90% of the costs of operation. TransCenter also raises funds from private sources, which when combined add about \$812 per student per year.

Because The CITIES Project High School opened in Fall 2004, the school receives a number of implementation grants to cover start-up costs, such as computers and supplies. CPHS received federal charter school funds totaling \$150,000, an implementation grant from EdVisions, and several grants from private foundations. Although charter schools in many Wisconsin districts can receive 100% of the state-shared cost of ADA, CPHS only receives about 67% due to funding guidelines in the school's charter with Milwaukee Public Schools. ADA funding amounts to about \$7,111 per student per year. CPHS, like other non-instrumentality charter schools, receives less ADA funding than the Partnership Schools. It also receives Title I funds and a 28% special education reimbursement from the federal government.

Accountability

All TransCenter Schools are accountable under the provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. There is flexibility in the law that allows schools to assess where students are upon enrolling and to demonstrate the relative gains after a year in the program. At this time, the concept of Adequate Yearly

Progress (AYP) is still under discussion in Wisconsin. There is a need to design appropriate measures for each school's specific mission. As for high-stakes testing in 10th grade, different students are tested each year, so the test does not reflect the impact that the school has made, nor does it demonstrate the progress a student has made after one year.

TransCenter Partnership Schools incorporate outcomes of standards and accountability in their charters or contracts with MPS under the CAR statute. MPS includes language from the statute in its contracts so that Partnership Schools are held to attendance rates, retention in school, credit earning rate, and graduation rate. TransCenter is able to measure relative academic gains through pre- and post-testing students and comparing a student's previous attendance rate versus his or her rate at the Partnership School. In SY 2003-2004, Shalom High School had a 100% graduation rate. It registered the following gains: 94% passed a reading or English course, 96% passed a math course, and 75% earned at least 4.5 credits during the school year.

In SY 2003-2004, NOVA High School had a 100% graduation rate. Students at NOVA High School and Middle School also achieved an average increase of one full grade level in reading and mathematics. At NOVA Middle School, 89% passed at least four core classes while 91% were promoted. Of NOVA High School students, 96% earned at least 4.5 credits during the school year, and 98% advanced to the next grade level. In the same school year, the graduation rate at El Puente was 86%, and 89% of the students made an average increase of one full grade level in reading and mathematics.

Commentary

Public school educators are generally suspicious, if not openly hostile, about the evolving charter school movement. As Milwaukee's experience since the 1980s demonstrates, however, charters can be useful as part of larger arrangements for providing dropouts and students at risk of dropping out with constructive paths to decent jobs and successful lives. Their flexibility and relative freedom from overbearing administrative authority help make charter schools a potentially attractive alternative to the curricular rigidities in many city school systems. Milwaukee's rich experience as a national leader in the charter school and contracting-out movements provides many lessons in tapping their promise as

public-private-civic educational partnerships that really can work. At times, some of an urban school system's thorniest challenges in dealing with vulnerable youth can be resolved, or at least intelligently approached, through ties to new partners and new ways of restructuring and redefining public schools.

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Additional Resources for Information on Milwaukee and Wisconsin Policy

Milwaukee Public Schools Diversified Community

Schools: www2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/dcs/dcs.htm

Technical Assistance & Leadership Center:

www.talcnewvision.org

Wisconsin Association of School Boards: Legislative

1999 Wisconsin Act 123: www.wasb.org/legislative/newlaws/act123.html

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Career and Technical Education: Children at Risk of Not Graduating from High School:

www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsis/let/atrisk.html

www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsis/let/atriskgrt.html

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction,

Wisconsin Charter Schools:

www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dfm/sms/pdf/chsyrbk1.pdf

Wisconsin State Legislature: Department of Public Instruction (Chapter PI 44): www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/pi/pi044.pdf

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¹ Research for this chapter was originally conducted by Mala Thakur and Kristen Henry of the National Youth Employment Coalition (www.nyec.org). The full text may be accessed in their publication, National Youth Employment Coalition (2005) *Financing Alternative Education Pathways: Profiles and Policy*. Washington, DC: Author.

CHAPTER 12

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

- *City-wide planning and interagency partnerships, including a comprehensive Reintegration System for youth leaving the justice system*
- *Community-based organizations adapting national program models to enhance local education and job training opportunities*
- *School district “contracting out” alternative education for dropout recovery*

At first glance, the statistics on Philadelphia, the nation’s fifth largest city with a population of 1.5 million, are anything but encouraging, especially for its less privileged youth. The Brookings Institution ranks it 97th among America’s 100 largest cities in workforce participation, 92nd in percentage of population with a bachelor’s degree, and 84th in median family income. According to Paul Harrington of Northeastern University’s Center for Labor Market Studies, 46.7% (87,571) of the city’s 187,330 16-24-year-olds are not enrolled in school and, of these, 19.9% (37,193) are also unemployed. Of those neither enrolled in school nor employed, 46% (17,097) are not high school graduates.

Focusing more directly on the student body of the city’s struggling public schools, the core economic and ethnic data are equally striking. The School District of Philadelphia has a predominantly African American and Latino student population of 214,000, with 57,000 students attending the District’s 55 high schools in the SY 2004-2005. More than 72% of students are from low-income families, with 80% eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. Approximately 2,300 youth are committed annually to residential placement in the juvenile justice system.

Trying to cope with such hard facts, Philadelphia stands out for having exceptional planning, consensus-building, and partnership mechanisms for recovering out-of-school youth. These arrangements enjoy the strong support of city government, employers, foundations, youth-serving intermediaries,¹ and community-based nonprofit organizations.

Consensus-building began in earnest under former Mayor Edward Rendell, now Pennsylvania’s Governor, and continues under the current leadership of Mayor John Street and School District of

Philadelphia CEO Paul Vallas. City leaders have created noteworthy opportunities to participate in constructive dialogue about how to reconnect the city’s dropouts. A strong commitment to data collection and analysis as a guide to policy undergirds the entire system.

Central to the entire process are two nonprofit intermediaries, **Philadelphia Safe and Sound (PSS)** and the **Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN)**. Philadelphia Safe and Sound monitors the city’s centralized data collection system and produces an annual Report Card measuring the quality of life for the city’s young people. The Philadelphia Youth Network plays the central role in creating a workforce development system for youth by staffing the Philadelphia Youth Council and overseeing programming for out-of-school youth throughout the city.

A powerful catalyst for much of what is occurring in Philadelphia is the **Youth Transition Funders Group (YTFG)**, a group of local, regional, and national philanthropies concerned with struggling students and out-of-school youth. YTFG provided grants to five cities, including \$275,000 to Philadelphia, for assessments of how to reduce the dropout rate and reconnect out-of-school youth. The Youth Transition Funders Group itself addresses such pivotal matters as inequities of race and class and seeks greater national visibility for the issue of dropout recovery. The YTFG grant stimulated Philadelphia’s youth programs to find ways to improve their capacity to use data properly, identify policies that help or impede meeting the needs of youth, increase the supply of high-quality educational options, and mobilize the necessary support among key partners and stakeholders who have traditionally operated in separate silos. Contributors to YTFG include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Carnegie Corporation

of New York, and the C.S Mott Foundation each of which provided funding for the national initiative with matching funds provided by Philadelphia's William Penn Foundation to extend the work of Philadelphia's local partnership. The Philadelphia Foundation and the Samuel S. Fels Fund have also contributed locally to the initiative.

As an example of a city creating an effective culture of collaboration, Philadelphia is home to several notable initiatives to serve vulnerable and out-of-school youth. Specifically, these include a collaborative effort by local agencies to redesign aftercare services for youth and a new approach for those leaving the juvenile justice system. **The Reintegration Reform Initiative** and its components (described below) were established to help young offenders refrain from offending again.

The city has many community-based organizations working under the umbrella of the Philadelphia Youth Network that strive to help out-of-school youth continue their education, enter employment, and remain violence free, in particular the **E³ Power Centers** and the **YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School**. The School District of Philadelphia has also increased its attention to out-of-school youth through newly-developed **Accelerated High Schools**. These allow over-age and under-credited youth, both in- and out-of-school, to expedite earning a high school diploma through contracted services with both nonprofit and for-profit organizations. This seeming jumble of acronyms and authorities makes surprisingly good sense in a city that, without the creativity and ingenuity it has come to represent, might never have been able to build a coherent youth policy and programs to implement it.

Philadelphia Youth Strategy

The city's Youth Council was—and remains—a prominent contributor to the cooperative spirit that, in 2003, prompted city government, the School District, and local intermediaries to develop a comprehensive out-of-school youth policy. The Council established the Out-of-School Youth Committee and increased its funding from the WIA statutory minimum of 30% to 50%. With all the right players at the table—representatives of the School District, Family Court, Department of Human Services, Philadelphia's WIA One-Stop System, the Mayor's Children's Investment Strategy, and other major youth service agencies—this action was a substan-

tive and symbolic step toward a general sharing of resources that would ultimately lead to the most feasible city-wide approach to helping the city's out-of-school youth.

Philadelphia Safe and Sound and the Children's Investment Strategy

Philadelphia Safe and Sound, established in 1995 with a grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Urban Health Initiative to conduct research, advocacy, and best practice program development, plays a major role in giving substance to Mayor Street's Children's Investment Strategy (CIS). Emphasizing youth development activities in the nonschool hours that provide preventive services to strengthen families and parent-child relationships, CIS has expanded and targeted its services while stressing performance and accountability. CIS is also responsible for an increase in the funding and programming for out-of-school time activities for Philadelphia's children.

Safe and Sound creates an annual Report Card, the most comprehensive study of children's health and safety indicators ever undertaken in Philadelphia. Serving as a vital resource for city government's planning decisions, the Report Card monitors 26 key indicators of childhood in Philadelphia and measures progress toward five overall "desired results" that represent how all children should live.

Safe and Sound uses the indicators to assess the city on its progress in meeting each goal. The scores range from one to five ("commendable" to "problematic"). A three-year time frame is considered when changing ratings of indicators. The indicators, such as academic performance, infant mortality, children living in poverty, healthy lifestyles, and juvenile victims of crime, measure progress toward specific quality of life goals for children and youth.

Philadelphia Safe and Sound also produces the Children's Budget as a companion to the Report Card. It analyzes all Philadelphia government spending for children and youth by the funding source, purpose of the spending, and the type of services provided. The Budget provides spending comparisons over time to help policymakers evaluate whether available funding streams are appropriately targeted and producing positive outcomes.

Beginning in 2005, Safe and Sound began issuing an individual Community Report Card for 12 Philadelphia neighborhoods. Critical indicators (such

2005 Report Card Results

Children are born healthy, thrive, and are ready for school	2—Promising
Children and youth live in stable and supportive families	3—Mixed
Children and youth are involved in healthy behaviors and do not engage in high-risk behaviors	3—Mixed
Children and youth live in safe, supportive communities and environments	5—Problematic
Children and youth achieve in school and make a successful transition to adulthood	3—Mixed

Source: 2005 Children's Report Card, Philadelphia Safe and Sound

as prenatal care, school dropout rates, juvenile arrests, and youth development opportunities) highlight progress and challenges. State-of-the-art mapping technology dramatically displays specific conditions with measurable impacts on the daily lives of children and youth in their neighborhoods. With this information, local leaders are able to target neighborhoods and advocate for the development and growth of healthy community-based programs and projects. The Community Report Cards will be used to launch neighborhood-based planning forums throughout the city.

Philadelphia Youth Network

Like Philadelphia Safe and Sound, the Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN) also supports system-building for the city's youth. PYN is a six-year-old nonprofit youth intermediary dedicated to building a comprehensive and coherent citywide youth workforce development system and helping young people gain access to the city's economic mainstream. PYN president Laura Shubilla and her staff play vital roles in advocating for and funding services to meet the needs of out-of-school and at-risk youth.

As a broker of youth services, PYN's work helps to strengthen the capacity of the city's youth-serving organizations while leveraging resources from many sources to support academic achievement, career success, and responsible citizenship. It oversees youth workforce programs for almost 10,000 young people annually with services provided by more than

40 youth-serving community organizations. PYN's annual budget of \$18 million is derived largely from government grants, foundations, and private donations.

The Philadelphia Youth Network manages WorkReady Philadelphia (WRP), a Youth Council- and Workforce Investment Board (WIB)-endorsed citywide youth workforce development system. The initiative coordinates existing programs and develops new approaches, with an emphasis on employer-paid internships, which are the heart of the campaign.

Through the 2005 WRP program, almost 6,000 students and out-of-school youth were served by several program strands, including:

- **Employer-paid summer internships** providing unsubsidized jobs for several hundred youth who receive training and mentoring in work readiness;
- **Youth Works**—a federally-funded summer and year-round effort serving 4,100 youth in work-experience, community service projects and college-based programs;
- **Summer Career Exploration Program**—a foundation-funded program providing enhanced summer jobs for 1,100 youth in local businesses;
- **Summer Development Institute's afternoon work experience**—an SDP-funded program providing paid work and service experiences in the afternoon for nearly 300 students attending summer school.

PYN also provides technical assistance, training, and curriculum development to youth-serving organizations and agencies. Its most recent focus is directed at underserved populations, especially court-involved youth and youth aging out of foster care.

Department of Human Services

Philadelphia's Department of Human Services (DHS) plays an important role in the city's youth strategy through its Division of Community-Based Prevention Services. Pennsylvania uses a portion of its federal TANF block grant to support child welfare prevention programming. The money is county-administered but state-supervised, with funding allocated to areas based on county requests. In Philadelphia, the Division of Community-Based Prevention Services of the Philadelphia Department of Human Services has allotted TANF funds for youth aging out of foster care, those leaving the juvenile justice system, and other out-of-school young people. The DHS-PYN working relationship is particularly collegial and effective.

“Each of the systems that come into contact with out-of-school youth may do so from different directions and for different purposes, but in the end they are all the same kids—and they are all our kids.”

—David Fair, Formerly of Philadelphia DHS

The Department of Human Services provides intensive case management services to help youth in foster care overcome challenges that may have led them to leave school or undermine their ability to achieve there. These services, delivered by foster care agencies, group homes, and institutions are comprehensive. They include assessment of the child’s needs and plans; advocacy for the child to the school district, especially when issues of special education arise; direct provision or linkage to tutoring for literacy and other competencies; and, for those not going back to school, assistance in linking to other supports that will help them become independent upon leaving foster care. Youth willing to participate also have access to the Achieving Independence Center, a one-stop program that offers a variety of supports, including education, job training, and housing assistance for adolescent youth in foster care, with a high priority on helping them engage or reengage with their educational and employment options.

To serve young people involved with the juvenile justice system, DHS established a similar network of supports in partnership with Philadelphia Family Court and PYN, which operates three E³ Power Centers, formerly called Youth Opportunity Centers. DHS funds Welcome Home Centers, which are within the E³ Centers, to provide reintegration services for youth returning from court placement. DHS also provides youth returning from detention with a team of “reintegration workers” who work with them, in close collaboration with their probation officers, while they are in placement and after their return to the community. These workers help youth take advantage of the array of supports available from city agencies and community-based organizations, including the E³ Centers. The Reintegration Reform Initiative is discussed below.

Through its community-based prevention initiatives, DHS also targets other out-of-school youth

who are not involved in the child protection or juvenile justice systems. Priority targets for these services are youth ages 15 or older who have 16 or more unexcused absences from school, homeless youth, adolescent sex workers, and youth who have dropped out of school but are seeking a way to reconnect. Through partnerships with an array of community organizations, DHS supports programs in job readiness, GED-preparation, high school diploma courses, and home schooling approaches. DHS’s afterschool programming helps adolescents to overcome such barriers to learning and works closely with the School District to link these youth to accelerated and other alternative educational options made available by the District.

The Reintegration Initiative

Concerned that large numbers of juvenile offenders were leaving residential placements without adequate supports to help them make the difficult transition back into mainstream society, Family Court, the Department of Human Services, the School District of Philadelphia, the Office of Behavioral Health, the Philadelphia Youth Network, and various other city agencies collaborated to redesign aftercare services based on information about best practices across the nation. The Initiative has received considerable support from the current Administrative Judge of Family Court, Judge Kevin Dougherty.

The Reintegration Initiative required the new collaborative to pool additional and redirected funding from several sources, most notably from DHS, the Probation Department, and the US Department of Labor’s Workforce Investment Act and Youth Offender Demonstration Act. In addition, DHS and Philadelphia Family Court received a grant from The MacArthur Foundation to support the administration and measure the quantifiable outcomes of the project.

The Reintegration Initiative embraced these new or enhanced services:

- Immediately following the decision by a court to place a youth in a residential facility, assessments are conducted to determine a level of aftercare supervision and support.
- At a minimum, all youths receive support and supervision, for three months, from a team consisting of a probation officer and a reintegration worker. This initial period, or Standard Level, is followed by three more months of probation. In

addition, the reintegration worker begins to work with the youth's family from the beginning of the youth's placement, until discharge from probation.

- Comprehensive, individualized, and community-based reintegration plans are then developed by the reintegration worker/probation officer teams within the first 60 days of placement and are reviewed regularly by a multidisciplinary team. These plans are the foundation of treatment within the placement and after release. Probation officers and reintegration workers visit the residential placement on a regular basis to monitor the youths' progress. Regular family visits prepare the family to better support and monitor the youth after discharge, and additional community linkages are explored and established.
- Youth most at risk (Intensive Level) receive additional services, both during placement and after discharge, that research shows to be effective. These services include Functional Family Therapy and the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Program. In addition, after discharge, they must participate in the daily community-based program at the Welcome Home Centers located within the E³ Power Centers, to supplement their case-management services.
- Regardless of level, all youth participate in competency-building community service projects run by the Probation Department and/or the reintegration workers, during home passes and after release.
- The Probation Reintegration Program Director, a high-level administrator from within the Juvenile Probation Department, chairs the multidisciplinary Reintegration Oversight Committee that reviews the plan for any youth at risk of failure in order to provide additional resources and guidance for supervision.
- A Cross-System Reintegration Coordinator, chosen jointly by DHS and the Probation Department, guides the collaborative, provides training and technical assistance to the partners, and ensures that all systems are appropriately involved and that potential conflicts between systems are quickly addressed.
- Considerable attention has been given to the barriers, which have historically made reintegration into the public schools difficult. This has included collaborative work with the School District, to facilitate credit retrieval and better align the curricula of residential placements with the School

District. The Reintegration Initiative has worked closely with the Philadelphia School District to improve the District's RETI-WRAP, the transitional program for youth returning to school from residential placement.

The Reintegration Initiative has put programs and support systems in place to prevent youth from reoffending by giving them safe places where they may go to engage in positive activities and gain educational and employment skills. Since the majority of those involved in the juvenile justice system lack a high school diploma or GED, the Initiative helps them reconnect to positive supports in the hope that this will deter them from reoffending. Philadelphia's Youth Violence Reduction Partnership (YVRP), Teen Centers, and E³ Centers are components of the city's reintegration system and are discussed below.

Philadelphia's Youth Violence Reduction Partnership

Philadelphia is home to an innovative program to reduce violent crime committed by youth ages 14-24 in three of Philadelphia's most violence-prone neighborhoods. Many youth have histories of multiple offenses that include violence and drugs, and about 70% had dropped out of school and had no diploma or GED when they were assigned to the Youth Violence Reduction Partnership (YVRP).

In 1999, a group of 24 youth-serving organizations and criminal justice agencies founded YVRP as a vehicle to steer young people at greatest risk of killing or being killed toward productive lives. Participants are those youth living in communities saturated with violence, guns, and drugs, and who suffer from economic and educational deprivation, who generally grow up in unstable home environments. Almost all YVRP participants are under court supervision, meaning that they have a probation or parole officer, and most have been convicted or adjudicated on a violence or drug-related charge at least once. Since January 1, 2000, over 1,400 young Philadelphians have been involved with YVRP, resulting in a significant decrease in the number of homicides in the neighborhoods where it operates.

Participants, referred to as "youth partners," are identified by adult and juvenile probation officers, police, prosecutors, and the local nonprofit organization, Philadelphia Anti-Drug/Anti-Violence Network (PAAN). The YVRP Operations Committee, composed of supervisors from the partnering operational

agencies, formally determines if they are appropriate for YVRP and, if so, requests the assignment of the youth partner to a street worker and a probation officer by PAAN and the appropriate probation department. The only formal criterion for entering into the program is whether, according to a consensus of the partner agencies, the potential youth partner is likely to kill or be killed in the near future.

The YVRP Program

The program employs two principles for helping youth participants remain “Alive at 25:” diverting them from violence through careful and constant supervision and providing them with the supports necessary to set them on the path to productive adulthood through relationships with caring adults. The program “works” because participants have almost daily contact with adults from YVRP agencies who provide constant supervision and monitoring. The police, probation officers (POs), and street workers, the latter employed by PAAN, have different roles, but are all part of a cohesive front-line team geared to helping participants. In total, YVRP involved more than 20 public and private organizations in its development and has a front-line staff of more than 50 police officers, probation officers, and street workers.

Street workers or POs visit the youth and their families almost daily—at home and at places of employment—and they check corners or “hot spots” during the evening and at night. On their nighttime patrols, police and POs try to see each participant four times a month while POs are also assigned to visit each participant at least twice a month, without police officers present, at the participants’ homes, jobs, or school. They also have formal meetings with

the youth in the probation office about once a week. The POs choose to participate in YVRP because, they said, they enjoy working closely with troubled youth and see the YVRP process as a way to help the young people and their communities.

Probation officers enforce the conditions of the participants’ probation in a variety of ways. They conduct drug tests; ensure that participants are in court-ordered drug treatment, counseling, work, or school; and make sure that participants stay off drug corners or away from specific individuals. They talk to the families, check on the general household situation, and find out what the participants want and need. POs also have the legal power to tighten or loosen conditions of probation, such as curfews and area restrictions. They have the authority to initiate an “expedited punishment” process with swift and certain consequences, such as incarceration or placement in a juvenile or detoxification facility. YVRP administrators consider expedited punishment a key to protecting these high-risk youth.

While having no legal authority over the youth partners, street workers actually have more contact with them compared to other front-line staff, with a street worker-to-youth partner ratio of 1:15. Street workers attempt to visit participants eight times each month at home and eight more times in the community, often while connecting them to support services. Street workers and POs share the responsibility of engaging youth in positive supports, such as schooling, job searches, paid work, community service, drug treatment, counseling, and organized recreation. They also improve home lives by helping the families of the participants find housing, employment, and health care.

Street workers play vital roles in YVRP. Since they live or have lived in the communities, they are not considered outsiders. Their understanding of the community culture helps them build trusting relationships with the youth and act as intermediaries between participants and law enforcement. Most street workers grew up in the same police districts where the participants live. They are generally in their late 20s and early 30s, and most are African American, although some are Latino and White. All are high school graduates and half have completed some college coursework. The majority became part of YVRP after working in other community-based organizations and youth groups. According to the June 2004 Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) evaluation of YVRP,

“Coming from that area, being blessed enough to get out of there when you see your friends die and go to jail...you just feel fortunate to get out of that. I was involved with drug activity, always in trouble when I was younger. So when I got out of it, I always told myself that if I ever got the chance to give back, this would be it.”

—YVRP Street Worker

Alive at 25, “The significance of street workers—the credibility they hold within the community and bring to the partnership—cannot be overstated.”

Street workers serve as friends and role models. They provide transportation to job interviews, organize trips and recreation, help with family problems, and lend an ear when someone needs to talk. Street workers are able to reinforce the rules of each youth’s individual probation sentence while also serving as trusted friends and confidantes. The P/PV evaluation explains that “street workers represent a critical bridge between the community and mainstream society—a support mechanism missing from many programs targeting high-risk youth.”

One street worker explained, “Coming from that area, being blessed enough to get out of there when you see your friends die and go to jail...you just feel fortunate to get out of that. I was involved with drug activity, always in trouble when I was younger. So when I got out of it, I always told myself that if [I] ever got the chance to give back, this would be it.”

Police officers constitute the third part of the line staff. They ride with POs on “targeted patrols” during the evening hours to ensure the safety of the POs and to help scan drug corners for violators. This collaboration between the police and POs provides a unified front and shows participants that the police support the POs’ authority. The hope is that police presence will allow officers to get to know neighborhood families outside the context of crime, thereby helping to break down the barriers between police and community.

The YVRP model works because of the continuing communication between agency staff and youth partners. This differs from more traditional juvenile and criminal justice systems, in which probation officers and police do not communicate with each other and the youth have no one to turn to outside of their community. POs and street workers speak informally at least once a week and up to several times a day. They also meet monthly to discuss individual cases.

Unlike other programs aimed at reconnecting youth, no single organization or funding stream is responsible for Philadelphia’s YVRP, but the District Attorney is considered to be its leader. YVRP did not require the formation of new organizations nor did it require its partners to take on dramatically new roles. But, YVRP does insist that the partners coordinate and communicate with each other, which is not always an easy task.

YVRP Outcomes

P/PV’s study, *Alive at 25*, concluded that YVRP has overcome issues of administration, finance, and coordination to run a decidedly effective program. Its emphasis on data helps researchers analyze the continuing effectiveness of the program. Monthly data provided for program management by a P/PV-created monitoring report disaggregates information by agency. The report includes basic information, such as the number of participants, the number contacted, where those contacts took place, the number never reached, and why not. It shows the number of youth involved in “positive supports,” broken down by activity, such as school, employment, substance abuse programs, and athletic leagues. It includes any violations, such as arrests, failed drug tests, or informal violations. Philadelphia Safe and Sound will soon assume responsibility from P/PV for tracking these data.

Current data show that the front-line staff has succeeded in supervising youth closely and helping many of them find employment, educational opportunities, rehabilitation, recreation, counseling, and training. Analyses of youth homicides in YVRP districts provide initial evidence that the program is helping high-risk youth stay alive. P/PV found that the majority of youth partners engage in education and employment: 40% of the participants were employed for three consecutive months or more after leaving the program, and 29% remained involved in education past noncompulsory age for three consecutive months or more. (Since all youth 18 or younger are legally mandated to attend school, statistical data do not include information on youth partners who had dropped out and then reconnected to education.)

On average, youth partners remain in YVRP for six to nine months and are either positively discharged or leave the program when their probation ends. If YVRP participants are arrested for another offense, the Operations Committee can reopen a case and extend some youths’ status in YVRP.

Teen Centers

In 2000, the Department of Recreation, with help from Philadelphia Safe and Sound, created nine Teen Centers to provide enhanced recreational and educational opportunities for older youth and to assist in reducing their involvement with the criminal justice system. Building on the experience of YVRP, it had become clear that to keep youth off the street the city

needed to provide appealing places for them to go.

First established in recreation centers in neighborhoods with high rates of youth violence, Teen Centers are open from 5 to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday and offer educational and cultural programs, youth development training, mentoring workshops, and job readiness courses, in addition to the sports and fitness programs offered at most recreational facilities. Outreach services seek to engage youth who may be at risk. Additional recreation and educational activities include: arcade games, large screen televisions, video games, literacy programs, Girls Empowerment Programs, Teen Center basketball tournaments, and dances, among others. Sue Buck, Teen Center Coordinator, said that a typical Friday night dance attracts as many as 200 young people.

Some Teen Centers have also become home to a literacy and employment training program, a joint effort between Philadelphia Safe and Sound and the Department of Recreation serving youth partners in YVRP and members of the Teen Centers. The program utilizes the READ 180 instructional model that combines teacher-led instruction with adaptive and individualized instructional software. Students leave the program once they have achieved a 12th grade reading level. This program began in Fall 2005 with incentives offered for participation.

City and community agencies such as the Department of Human Services, PAAN, YVRP, and local schools refer youth to the Teen Centers. PAAN workers also volunteer to supervise large events, such as dances. Of the 2,200 Teen Center registered youth, approximately 31% have had contact with the juvenile justice system. Demographically, 59% are African American, 21% Latino, 4% White, 2% multiethnic, 1% Asian or Pacific Islander, 1% other, and 12% unknown.

Welcome Home Centers, another crucial aspect of the Reintegration Reform Initiative, is discussed in the Community-Based Organizations Section.

Community-Based Organizations

Philadelphia's many community-based organizations (CBOs) are important in reconnecting the city's out-of-school youth. CBO-run programs range from long-standing programs to newly-developed models for out-of-school youth. The Philadelphia Youth Network plays the key leadership role with local CBOs as it manages competitive grant processes involving

WIA, TANF and foundation funding; provides technical assistance to the programs; and convenes the groups to discuss issues of collective interest. PYN's leadership is playing the key role in keeping the former Youth Opportunity Centers going after the end of federal funding. They have been instrumental in reprogramming additional funding from Philadelphia's Department of Human Services and the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board's Youth Council. The former YO Centers, now renamed E³ Power Centers, have added reintegration services to serve adjudicated youth through Welcome Home Centers that are located within the E³ Centers. As a result, E³ Centers can now serve a more geographically diverse group of youth with an emphasis on out-of-school and court-involved youth. Additionally, the YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School is a large and exemplary YouthBuild program that has worked with dropouts for over 13 years.

E³ Power and Reintegration Centers

Among its other activities, PYN oversees three E³ Power Centers (Empowerment, Education, and Employment). These Centers developed out of Philadelphia's five-year \$20 million federal Youth Opportunity (YO) Grant in 1999 from the US Department of Labor which targeted youth ages 14-21 residing in the Empowerment Zones to provide services to in-school and out-of-school youth. (For further discussion of the YO Program, see Chapter 19).

PYN assumed management of the Youth Opportunity centers in 2002 and initiated a redesign of their service delivery structure under a new name: E³ Power Centers. Beginning in July 2005, through a competitive RFP process, PYN turned management of the three centers over to three community-based organizations: The Bridge, an affiliate of Philadelphia Health Management Corporation; Resources for Human Development, Inc. (RHD), a nonprofit social service organization; and Congreso de Latinos Unidos, Inc., a community-based organization dedicated to improving the lives of the city's Latino population. With other funding streams to support the centers, eligibility to participate has expanded beyond Empowerment Zone residents. Each of the three centers is now required to recruit and serve approximately 180 out-of-school youth from the neighborhoods near their physical location. Between 10% and 20% of the required 180 participants must still be Empowerment Zone residents.

With financial support from the Department of Human Services, the E³ Power Centers also host reintegration centers known as Welcome Home Centers for youth returning from juvenile placement facilities who are at the highest risk of recidivism. These Centers provide services and supports for up to 90 youth returning from juvenile placement. They range from ages 12-18 (average of 16.9) and have been in placement for 6 to 15 months (average of nine). These Welcome Home Centers have been seamlessly integrated into the E³ Power Centers rather than being two separate programs located in the same building. The only difference between Welcome Home Center and E³ participants is that youth returning from placement are required to participate in each of E³'s Four Pathways for specific, monitored lengths of time, while other E³ participants have no such requirement.

David Fair, former Director of the Division of Community-Based Prevention Services of the Philadelphia Department of Human Services, explained that DHS became involved in the continuation of the YO Centers because of its participation in the WIB Youth Council and the visionary leadership of PYN. "The network they had built with the YO Centers provided a perfect framework for us to build a system of reintegration services for delinquent youth returning from placement. In the end, it was a classic 'no brainer.'" DHS targets services to youth who are "clearly beginning on the path to failure—missing school regularly, getting into trouble with the law for the first time, behaving in ways that make it difficult for the parents to control them—in order to concentrate human and financial resources where they can be most effective. "We hope," said Fair, that this approach "will divert these youth from a path that will lead them to becoming dependent adults, and to show the taxpayers not only that there really is hope for these kids, but that it's actually cheaper to invest in their hopes rather than in their pain."

The Four E³ Pathways

Services in the E³ Power Centers are organized into four Pathways: Education, Employment and Placement, Occupational Skills, and Life Skills. Working with their advisors and based on their own assessments and goals, out-of-school youth select from among these four service areas. Participants in the Welcome Home Centers must take part for a mandated number of hours in each Pathway. All

are encouraged to participate in multiple Pathways with the objective of building the necessary skills to achieve long-term educational, employment, or occupational benefits.

The Education Pathway includes several options for Center participants to increase their knowledge and earn a credential. There are three levels of classes for youth preparing for the GED. Youth must pass through each of these levels, organized in 10-week cycles, before taking the GED examination. Alternatively, they may participate in a program aligned with School District standards and curricula where they may earn District credits toward graduation. With the assistance of Center staff, students may also choose to attend a high school or alternative school to receive individual tutoring and links to postsecondary education, including preparation for the SAT.



E³ students work together on a computer project. (Photo courtesy of Philadelphia Youth Network)

For the Employment and Placement Pathway, participants must complete at least 12 hours of an intensive work-readiness program, including resume-writing, interviewing, and interpersonal skills needed for workplace success. They may also participate in short-term subsidized employment, a self-directed job search leading to unsubsidized employment, rapid attachment into full- or part-time unsubsidized jobs through CareerLink for those youth demonstrating readiness for employment, and community service and service-learning opportunities. PYN is also working with the managers of the centers and several business partners to establish youth-operated business enterprises as a strategy for preparing for

employment. These youth-operated enterprises will be funded under separate contracts in partnership with PYN and selected vendors.

The Occupational Skills Pathway comprises skills training programs accessible directly or by referral at the Centers. Some E3 Centers have introduced other types of on-site training beyond the already available partnerships of multimedia CD/video development and production, Certified Nurse Aid training, and Customer Service Retail Skills Certificate training. The Life Skills Pathway has a number of electives for enrichment provided through the Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment Tool and Guidebook. These domains include Daily Living, Housing and Community Resources, Money Management, Self-Care, Social Development, and Work and Study Skills. This Pathway also includes community service, training in aggression replacement, drug and alcohol prevention services, and victim and community awareness.

Reintegration Center participants are required to attend the education pathway for six hours per week as well as the employment and placement pathway, participate in the Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment Tool and Guidebook activities, and perform community service weekly. In addition, they must go through the drug and alcohol prevention services within their first 90 days of leaving placement, attend three one-hour sessions per week of aggression replacement training, and have daily victim and community awareness training.

Each of the three centers offers courses in the four pathways, but each center has its own personality created by the differences in the CBOs that run the programs and the various neighborhood characteristics. “Each vendor brought a skill set and certain strengths to the centers. For example, Congreso de Latinos Unidos is focused on occupational skills while the Bridge has a strong educational focus since it also operates a school in Philadelphia,” said PYN’s Chief Operations Officer Stacy Holland.

All three centers are dedicated to using accepted principles of youth development in engaging young people to change their lives. For example, at the North Broad Street site run by Resources for Human Development, staff asked students what motivational posters they wanted on the walls. Students responded and it is now decorated with posters commemorating civil rights leaders, famous African American artists and athletes, and the students’ own poetry. Broad Street Director Julius Jackson said, “We try to

make kids believe in themselves and show them that people believe in them.” The students elect peers to work with professional staff in planning the center’s program.

The Parkside Center, run by the Bridge, emphasizes extracurricular activities. Students may participate in photography, mural arts, film, and music and music video production programs. The Bridge also has ties to LA Fitness, a Philadelphia health club, where students exercise. Students enrolled at the Bridge contribute to the community through Saturday community service activities. All three centers provide positive academic and recreational activities for young people throughout the week.

In 2003, Youth Opportunity Centers had 155 new enrollments of out-of-school youth and 528 new enrollments of in-school youth. From 2000 to 2005, the centers served a total of 2,402 youth. In 2003, 92% of the youth participated in Center activities five hours or more per month and 68% met one or more interim education, training, or employment goals. Overall, 150 YO participants met their education goals, 389 obtained short-term unsubsidized employment, 60 achieved long-term unsubsidized employment, and 22 entered long-term occupational skills training. The Congreso-operated E3 Center has a large number of Latino participants, while the other two centers’ participants are primarily African American. More males than females use the centers, mainly because the young people in the Welcome Home Centers are primarily male.

YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School

Like the over 200 other YouthBuild programs nationwide, the mission of YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School (YBP) is to provide out-of-school youth with a broad range of tools, supports, and opportunities. Founded in 1992 and based on the national YouthBuild model, YBP gives high school dropouts the opportunity to earn educational credentials while developing employment and leadership skills through a concrete community service: rehabilitating rundown or abandoned housing for future sale to low-income families. (See Chapter 17 for further information on the national YouthBuild model.) Along with 25 other YouthBuild programs, YBP has chosen the charter school model as the most appropriate vehicle for helping its young people earn a high school diploma while simultaneously learning job skills and providing valuable community service.

Public charter school funding helps to ensure YBP's fiscal sustainability, a perennial problem that can make or break efforts to recover dropouts.

In SY 2004-2005, YBP enrolled 191 students ages 18 to 21 who were chosen from a pool of over 950 applicants. All YBP students are considered at-risk of dropping out of school. Over 85% are from low- or very low-income homes, 64% have no health insurance, approximately one-third have dependent children, 20% have been victimized by violence or crime, 68% have been expelled or suspended from their previous schools, 31% have been arrested, and 23% have been through juvenile court. Half the participants are women, 91% are African American, 4% are Latino, and 4% are White.

When they enroll in the YouthBuild Philadelphia program, young people are limited by the stereotypical role of "high school dropout." By graduation, they see themselves in a multitude of positive roles: as students, as achievers, as helpers, as builders, and as leaders.

The first YBP class in SY 1992-1993 enrolled 24 students and rehabilitated one abandoned house for a low-income family. Since then, YBP has grown into one of the nation's largest and most successful YouthBuild programs. Over 950 young adults have completed the program with 85% earning their high school diploma in a 10-month period. Graduates move on to successful lives after leaving YBP; of the 2004 graduating class, 20% enrolled in college and 41% in a vocational school or job training program, while 33% became employed full-time. YBP students have rehabilitated over 60 houses and, in a recently added computer technology program, refurbished over 1,500 computers.

Academics at YBP

The YBP curriculum meets the academic standards of the School District of Philadelphia and is based on an intensive course load, including math, science, English, and integrated humanities. Academic offerings are balanced with hands-on job skills training and an

appreciation for community service through either the Construction Training or Technology Training Program. Participants in Construction Training learn building skills at a worksite where, working in crews with an experienced adult supervisor, they rehabilitate abandoned houses for sale to low-income families. Students in Technology Training learn software and hardware skills while they refurbish old computers for donation to community organizations and schools.

Overall, YBP sees its mission as helping out-of-school youth rebuild their lives while they rebuild their communities. "When they enroll in our program," reads the YBP brochure, "students are limited by the stereotypical role of 'high school dropout.' By graduation, they see themselves in a multitude of positive roles: as students, as achievers, as helpers, as builders, and as leaders."

From September to June, YBP students attend academic classes for six weeks from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and then alternate, on the same time schedule, with six weeks of job training projects in construction or technology. The education model seeks to maintain an effective learning environment aimed at improving student's basic skills and increasing self-esteem and capacity for critical thinking. With a student-to-teacher ratio 20:1 and a carefully selected staff of certified teachers, case managers, and other professionals, students receive the individual support services they need in addition to the intensive core curriculum. Students pursue such enrichment courses as leadership development, AmeriCorps (service-learning), computer education, career development, and life skills.

Among its other features, the curriculum enables YBP students to connect content to their own life stories. In English classes, for example, students read autobiographies of inner-city youth and author their own biographies while developing fundamental writing skills. This emphasis on student-centered material is one of the many qualities that helps set YouthBuild apart from most public school curricula. "At YouthBuild," said graduate Craig March, "We learn so much about ourselves and our culture. The stories we read actually mean something to us... We can relate to them." Students keep daily journals and write poetry, folktales, research papers, and essays.

At the beginning of the year, students are administered pretests to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in each academic subject and to identify any

special educational needs. Individualized instruction is then given where additional assistance is needed. All students participate in an Academic Support class where they complete work from their core classes with the assistance of two certified special education teachers. Not all students are considered special education students; rather, YBP provides intensive academic support for all students to ensure content mastery.

Frequent student evaluations provide teachers and instructors with opportunities to study student work and to assess their progress. Students present portfolios in every subject in each academic trimester. The portfolio presentations and assessments enable them to make important connections between theory and practice. The small size of the school makes it possible to provide students with detailed feedback (in areas of growth, strength, or functional deficiency) at the end of each trimester through individual report card conferences attended by each student's academic advisor, construction trainer, case manager, mentor, and the Director of Education.

Job Training

YBP's intensive academic curriculum is combined with hands-on job training. Students take one of two job training programs, Construction or Technology, based upon their interest and the availability of the program. Construction Training allows each participant to experience the entire process of "full-gut," or rehabilitation, of abandoned houses through an arrangement that allows YBP to act as a subcontractor to complete work on abandoned houses owned by the city or the Community Development Corporation.

Students at the construction site enjoy a student-to-instructor ratio of 12:1. They learn major aspects of construction from safe handling and proper use of materials and tools to demolition and cleanout. They work with certified trainers to learn such skills as interior framing of walls and ceilings, floor preparations, interior finish work, and installation of doors and windows. Instructors also use appropriate moments at the worksite to strengthen students' academic skills through hands-on construction activities. When students are framing a house, for example, they learn about the mathematical concepts behind framing and strengthen their skills in measurement and tool use. Students building stairs are engaged in a module on geometry, thereby gaining a better un-

derstanding of these concepts. Interested participants go on to complete internships with private sub-contractors where they learn skills in plumbing, roofing, and electrical work.

Overall, students experience the pride of transforming a severely damaged property into a well-built home for a family of grateful new owners. About 30% of the students who complete the Construction Training Program pursue careers in construction; many are linked into union-sponsored registered apprenticeships and internship programs immediately following graduation. While not all YouthBuild students choose to remain in construction, all benefit from equally important lessons in teamwork, dependability, punctuality, perseverance, and preparedness.

YouthBuild Philadelphia's Technology Training Program was piloted in 2003 as another option in job skills training. It offers 25 students an opportunity to explore a career offering excellent opportunities for growth and advancement. The program provides participants with industry-recognized training in hardware and software and eases their passage into the computer technology field.

As part of the Technology Training Program, students acquire donated computers from local and national businesses on which they perform diagnostic evaluations, complete necessary repairs, and install them refurbished in qualified, underserved community organizations and schools. They then provide the recipient organizations with training courses so they can maximize use of the donated technology. Students learn the skills necessary to operate various computer programs, as well as to instruct other YBP members in how to use the technology and provide help desk services to staff and students. In addition to learning valuable skills in hardware and troubleshooting, students train in business and design applications, including Adobe PhotoShop, Microsoft Office, and Microsoft Publisher.

For the portion of the YBP program spent in hands-on job training, students earn a minimum wage stipend, which with perfect attendance, amounts to \$290 every two weeks during the three trimesters. No stipend is provided for the time students are engaged in academic studies.

Transition Services

YBP provides all students and alumni with continuing access to career development, placement in jobs



Left: Students work in teams to complete an academic assignment. Right: YBP students use mathematical skills learned in the classroom to complete their construction projects. (Photos courtesy of YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School)

and postsecondary education, and alumni support through a Transition Services Program that helps graduates as they continue their education, advance in the workplace, and make plans for the future. Most YouthBuild students come from families with few, if any, role models of responsible employment and a similar lack of family networks to locate jobs.

Thus, for many, YBP provides the only help they can get in establishing a job network and support system.

The Transition Services Program includes placement support and counseling for jobs in construction, technology, and other fields; support for enrollment in continuing education (including Education Awards through the AmeriCorps program); job

A Day in the Life of a YouthBuild Philadelphia Student

Marie is a 20-year-old high school dropout with a two-year-old son. Before enrolling at YBP, she worked part-time as a supermarket cashier and dreamed of going to college and becoming a teacher.

It is 8 a.m. Tuesday and Marie is in Morning Program, where her program manager takes attendance and goes over the day's schedule. Then the group reviews yesterday's Youth Congress meeting and the dress code policy.

At 8:05 a.m., the students split into three groups, and Marie heads to Integrated Humanities class where she discusses the role African Americans played in World War II. English class for her group starts at 9:20 a.m., and Marie writes a first draft of an essay on the life and times of the poet Margaret Walker. In math class she works with a group, to solve geometry theorems. After a break for lunch, Marie goes to her service-learning class where she and her service partner use their geometry skills to design a blueprint for a vacant lot they will transform into a community park. At 2:05 p.m., she heads to the computer lab where she works independently on Microsoft PowerPoint, developing a presentation on the findings of her fish farming study to present for her science class the following day. At 3:30 p.m., she stops by the case manager's office to confirm her appointment for lunchtime tomorrow, and then heads home.

The following week, Marie will be at the construction site, learning how to install drywall and hang interior doors. She has to make sure she arrives there before 7:30 a.m., since she is part of a team that is competing for a "Crew with Perfect Attendance Award." During her lunch break she will take photographs of the house so that she can include them in her multimedia construction portfolio.

When they return to the worksite, Marie and her crew will begin to paint the interior walls. Marie's crew and two alternate crews working on the house will have it completely rehabbed and ready for the new homeowners by the end of the program year.

development; need-based financial aid; and alumni activities so that young adults can continue to be connected to a supportive peer group.

YouthBuild encourages students to seek post-secondary education and helps them navigate the process of applying to college and obtaining financial aid. It also offers SAT preparatory classes, counseling, and additional academic instruction to help prepare them for college success. It organizes college fairs and visits with nearby higher education institutions such as Temple University, Cheyney University, and Community College of Philadelphia.

For students who choose to enter the workforce immediately upon graduation, YBP has developed a network of individuals, corporations, and public agencies that employ its graduates. It also has connections to the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporation, Home Depot, Avis, and many union apprenticeship programs and large construction companies and developers.

Support Services

Realizing that many of their students need extra support and guidance to be successful, YBP also provides extensive support services for its students:

- **Case Management:** Upon entry, each YBP student is assigned a case manager, the central person in the lives of the students and the key person who coordinates any needed support services. Students meet with their case managers to develop a comprehensive personal assessment of their goals, self-esteem, substance abuse, sexual health and practices, family relationships, educational history, employment history, medical history, health insurance, finances, and any legal issues. Students have individual counseling sessions with the case manager and are also assigned an in-house staff mentor who serves as an additional source of support and encouragement.
- **Life Skills:** Mastery of life skills is a critical graduation standard at YBP and is integrated into all facets of the program, including construction training, technology training, service-learning class, leadership development class, core academic subjects, and career development. Students attend weekly gender-based group sessions on personal relationships, sexual health, rape and sexual abuse prevention, substance abuse, and parenting. The men's and women's groups separately handle topics that will help them deal with everyday life

issues, such as parenthood, birth control, personal responsibilities, and self-esteem. Students discuss how to change negative perceptions, deal with anger, learn to accept and respect their accomplishments, and how to deal with the loss of a loved one and forgive past mistakes. Through these exercises in life skills, students recognize and demonstrate their unique strengths and talents.

- **Community Service:** Students attend a civic engagement/service-learning class to explore community issues of education, community outreach, beautification, hunger, homelessness, and violence. Service projects throughout Philadelphia include sorting and packaging food donations, cleaning vacant lots, and maintaining community gardens. Each year, students give over 10,000 hours of community service to Philadelphia charities and community organizations. Those performing a minimum of 900 hours of service earn a continuing education award of \$2,300 from AmeriCorps.
- **Special Education:** YBP's special education program meets the requirements of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Upon admission into the program, all students take an academic screener, the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), to establish their skill levels in reading and mathematics. Students whose grade equivalents in either subject fall below 4.5, or whose reading and math grade equivalents are separated by four or more grade levels, are referred for an evaluation under the supervision of the school psychologist. Special education students are not separated from their classmates; rather, they all attend mainstream academic classes. Certified special education teachers provide the requisite services, resources, and supports to promote academic success. In addition, special education teachers work with the regular education teachers so that accommodations are made for each student in the regular education program. The Director of Education, a certified special education teacher, monitors implementation of the students' Individual Education Plans, including the required transition services.
- **Health Care:** Students ages 18 and older do not qualify for national children's health programs. YBP does not have a nurse on staff but it does offer access for students to health care professionals and services. Since 85% of the students are from low- or very low-income families, and 64% have

YouthBuild Program Funding

Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction-charter school funding	\$1,200,000
US Department of Housing and Urban Development (2004 grant)	\$700,000
Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development	\$665,000
School District of Philadelphia Alternative Education Funding (Funding for 25 students as part of the Accelerated Schools)	\$250,000
AmeriCorps/Corporation for National and Community Service	\$246,000
Pennsylvania AmeriCorps Commission	\$196,000
YouthBuild USA (subgrant from US Department of Labor adjudicated youth reentry program)	\$160,000
Workforce Investment Act—via the WIB Youth Council, administered by the Philadelphia Youth Network	\$240,000
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (subgrant from YouthBuild USA)	\$100,000
Corporate, foundation, and individual grants	\$40,000
Other	\$227,000
Total Revenue	\$4,024,000

no health insurance, YBP provides vision, dental, general health and sexually-transmitted disease screenings, and medical assistance to all students. Case managers help students navigate state medical assistance programs and local community resources.

- **Leadership Development:** Leadership development and youth voice are essential to the success of the YouthBuild model. At the beginning of the school year, 15 students are elected by their peers to the student government or Youth Congress. This committee is active in policy issues and in efforts to enrich the YBP program. Youth Congress meets with the Executive Director every other week to discuss programmatic and policy issues. It is regarded as an effective tool for fostering leadership and promoting the idea of accountability to peers.

All students are given the opportunity to serve in a leadership capacity and to have their voices heard. Construction trainers select squad leaders, and technology trainers assign individual duties to students at their hands-on job training sites. At the school site, students help pick the locations of service projects, contact community organizations, and lead tours of the facility for visitors. Students

fill out frequent evaluations of classes, teachers, staff, and the school. These evaluations provide YBP staff with multiple opportunities to examine academic progress, student concerns, and staff performance. In a 2005 student survey, all of the students said they recommended the program to others and, after the first three weeks, 85% believed that they had a strong, positive relationship with two or more staff members.

Leadership and Staffing

The YBP staff of 45 includes six academic teachers, eight construction instructors, and a manager, three technology instructors, four case managers, three graduate transition services personnel, nine full-time AmeriCorps volunteers, plus administrative and support staff. Executive Director Simran Sidhu has been on staff for 10 years and has served as Director for three. She attributes YBP's success, thusly:

Since our inception we have stayed true to our mission. We continue to serve at-risk youth regardless of their past histories and academic levels, and we continue to believe that it is our duty to provide them with as many high quality opportunities and supports as we can. We are comprehensive in the services we provide and we

constantly push for improvements in program quality. We are honest with ourselves as we assess our effectiveness, and this allows us to admit weakness and then build them into strengths. We focus on hiring the best people for the program because they are the magic that brings it all together for the young people.

Funding

All YouthBuild programs rely on a variety of funding sources to support their work. YBP's budget for SY 2005-2006 is \$4,024,000, derived from the sources in the table (top of page 136).

After 13 years of carefully honing the original YouthBuild model, YBP has evolved into one of the largest YouthBuild programs in the nation, respected locally and in the state capital of Harrisburg. Charter school legislation has enabled YBP to focus on meeting the needs of several hundred young people, notably students who have not been successful in traditional schooling, and who have, in effect, been written off by many.

Other Notable Community-Based Programs

Philadelphia also has many other alternative educational and workforce development programs available to out-of-school youth run by community-based organizations, including:

- **The Philadelphia Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC)** runs GED and hospitality training programs for out-of-school youth and adults. The Learning Opportunities Center uses an individualized, computer-assisted, self-paced, open entry/open-exit instructional system to provide adult learners with literacy training, Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED test preparation, and pre-vocational training information. The Hospitality Training Institute runs Opportunities Inn, a training institute devoted to providing the hospitality industry with a skilled workforce. (See Chapter 16 for more information about the national OIC program.)
- **Youth Empowerment Services (YES)** serves youth and young adults ages 17-22 in one of three programs. Digital Media Training Program (DMTP) is a hands-on job training program focusing on graphics and web design, video production, audio engineering, and digital video editing. It uses state-of-the-art, professional-grade equip-

ment and software taught by trained media arts specialists. A second program, Changing Tracks, is dedicated to youth who have been truant and/or delinquent and need academic and personal support. The Voices Project engages out-of-school youth in project-based civic activities and mentoring opportunities for Temple University students. The Project operates through Temple University's Community Collaborative in partnership with the Big Picture Alliance.

- **The Indochinese American Council (IAC)**

provides an adult high school diploma program for out-of-school youth ages 19 and older. It is competency-based and uses standardized tests and a life skills curriculum. IAC is funded by the US Department of Labor and the US Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Education.

- **ASPIRA** offers out-of-school youth a diploma track via the Edison High School Educational Options Program (EOP) and ASPIRA Kensington High School EOP. ASPIRA prepares high school dropouts and students at risk of dropping out for a diploma through afternoon classes and one-on-one morning tutoring classes at several locations. The program is open to youth and young adults ages 17-21 with at least 11 high school credits for admission. Through this program, students also participate in a six-week summer employment program and a 60-hour internship.

The School District of Philadelphia's Accelerated High Schools

The School District of Philadelphia's (SDP) Office of Secondary Education spearheads the District's internal efforts to recapture its dropouts. It offers newly-created Accelerated High Schools and an Educational Options Program (EOP). The Accelerated High Schools serve students ages 17-21 who are out-of-school, at risk of dropping out of school, who have less than five credits, or who are returning from adjudicated court placement.

SDP decided to outsource the accelerated schools for over-age and under-credited students to three organizations. Its first contracts were awarded in 2004 to Camelot Schools, a for-profit Texas company; Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America (OICA), a Philadelphia nonprofit group providing education, training, and other services; and One Bright Ray, another Philadelphia nonprofit that also runs a charter school in the city. All accelerated



A CADI teacher meets with the student body president to discuss school issues. (Photo courtesy of OIC CADI)

school teachers are hired by the contractors and are nonunionized employees. Another accelerated school will open in the winter of 2006 with a goal of eight regionally-based schools opening by 2008.

All accelerated schools receive funding based on the number of students to be served and are required to use the District's standardized curriculum to ensure that learning meets state standards. When students complete the program, which varies in length depending on how many credits the student has previously earned, they receive a traditional high school diploma that has no mention of the accelerated program. It takes approximately two-and-one-half years to graduate from an accelerated high school if a student enters without any credits.

SDP also has a relationship with the YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School (YBP) in which 25 YBP students are funded by SDP directly instead of through the school's charter. Accelerated high school students in the YouthBuild School are seamlessly integrated and do not know which entity is funding their education. Those enrolled in YBP through the accelerated schools will receive a YBP diploma, not a traditional District diploma like the other accelerated students. (For more about YouthBuild Philadelphia see pages XX above.)

All accelerated schools are designed to accommodate no more than 250 to 300 students. SDP is already finding that demand for the program is outstripping supply. In its first year of operation, Camelot's accelerated high school, the Excel Academy, enrolled 125 students in the 9th grade and OICA's Career & Academic Development Institute (CADI) enrolled 150.

The accelerated programs are credit-based. They represent a new experience for SDP because the District's alternative schools had previously focused on disciplinary programs designed to serve students expelled from their traditional high schools under provision of Pennsylvania Act 27. The accelerated schools, thus, represent the District's latest effort to provide alternative options for students who are not successful in its traditional comprehensive high schools.

OICA's CADI is the only accelerated school located in Center City, Philadelphia's downtown area. Its focuses on academics and to prepare its students for postsecondary education. Students take two periods per day of English, math, science, and history and complete assignments on the computer-based Extra Learning Systems educational software (ELS). ELS's "bite-sized" learning modules and ancillary tests prepare students for the rigors of test-taking. Students must demonstrate competency at the 85% level before advancing to the next lesson. All CADI students have teacher-time and computer-time in order to master the material. The school's emphasis on academics enabled 34 students to graduate in its first year of operation. The OICA CADI's student body is predominantly African American with an enrollment of 56 females and 61 males enrolled in September 2005.

Participants in the CADI program customarily need extra services and follow up in order to be successful in school and life. Two case managers assist students in their educational pursuits and attempt to remedy any negative environmental influences. They provide students with additional positive influences and assistance, such as asking positive role models and other volunteers to support the academic and functional aspects of students' success, including job placement assistance, tutoring, and financial assistance. They provide counseling and assistance to help students achieve beyond their perceived capabilities.

CADI students may participate in extracurricular activities sponsored by OICA: flag-football and basketball intramural leagues as well as an afterschool program operated in the building by Philadelphia Safe and Sound. The majority of students, however, work after school in order to support themselves and their families. CADI students benefit from OICA's managerial experience. The organization regularly raises money for scholarships for program graduates and contributes in-kind and financial resources to

underwrite specific activities throughout the year.

Another intervention sponsored by SDP, the Educational Options Program (EOP), serves students ages 17-21 who have eight or more credits. EOP serves both in-school and out-of-school youth who wish to attend classes, for 15 hours a week, from 3:30 to 6:30 pm Monday through Thursday. There are 11 EOP sites in the city, including one in a correctional facility. These programs are not accelerated and operate on a block schedule with students taking two 90-minute courses each day. EOP is located at traditional high schools and courses are taught by District teachers who have been specially trained on strategies to engage this population.

Gateway to College, beginning in September 2006, will be another option for Philadelphia's out-of-school youth. The Community College of Philadelphia will administer the Gates Foundation's national Gateway program. (See Chapter 5 for more information about Gateway to College in Portland, Oregon.)

Conclusion

The sheer magnitude of Philadelphia's population of vulnerable and out-of-school youth could discourage even the most optimistic policymakers and service-providers. This not the case in the nation's 5th-largest city, where a large roster of creative options and resources helps reconnect youth to the mainstream and is backed by unusually dedicated leadership. The emerging Philadelphia story is becoming a showcase of effective cross-system collaboration to attack the seemingly endless range of issues faced daily by many thousands of young people.

Of the keys to Philadelphia's growing success in reclaiming dropouts, none has proved more vital than the readiness of city officials to initiate and support the many-sided collaborative efforts among youth-serving organizations of all kinds, notably community-based nonprofits and the private sector, which epitomize the city's approach. Politically savvy and imaginative, yet realistic, the people staffing the city's reconnection efforts are at all levels of the power-structure. Their dedication, strong top-level support, partnerships, and collaboration are the hallmarks of this city-wide effort. If there is a negative note to be sounded, it is the obvious one: Limited resources prevent the city, school district, and other partners from serving more than a small fraction of the youth who would profit tremendously from the

kinds of opportunities available to far too few of their peers.

Contact Information

For more information about the Philadelphia Youth Network:

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For more information about Philadelphia Safe and Sound:

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For more information about Philadelphia's Department of Human Services:

Cheryl Ransom-Garner, Commissioner
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For more information about the Youth Violence Reduction Partnership:

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For more information about the Teen Centers:

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For more information about Accelerated High Schools:

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For more information about the OIC Career and Academic Development Institute:

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For more information about the E3 Power Centers:

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Additional Resource

For more information about out-of-school youth in Philadelphia, including the *Education Programs Guide for Out-of-School Youth*: www.osyphila.org

¹ For discussion of intermediary organizations, see Blank, M.J., Brand, B., Deich, S., Kazis, R., Politz, B., & Trippe, S. (n.d.). *Local intermediary organizations: Connecting the dots for children, youth, and family*. Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum. The Intermediary Network's website: www.intermediarynetwork.org



Part II

Major National Programs

PART II: MAJOR NATIONAL PROGRAMS

Introduction: National Programs Serving Out-of-School Youth

Part Two highlights six national programs that combine multicomunity reach with decades of experience in helping out-of-school youth reconnect with their communities:

- *Job Corps*
- *Jobs for America's Graduates*
- *National Guard Youth ChalleNGe*
- *Opportunities Industrialization Centers*
- *YouthBuild*
- *Youth Service and Conservation Corps*

Taken together, these programs enroll a large portion of the nation's out-of-school youth who participate in organized education, job training, and preparation for civic participation. In Part One, we described some of these national programs in action at the local level—particularly YouthBuild and Youth Service and Conservation Corps—where they play impressive, often highly effective, roles.

Unfortunately, the combined annual enrollment of dropouts in these six programs totals only 150,000 youth at most. When this number is contrasted with the 6,270,000 18-24-year-olds who (in 2000) had earned neither a high school diploma nor a GED, we face one powerful indicator of how poorly our nation is responding to the enormity of the dropout problem and its dire consequences.

To be sure, as the profiles of 12 communities demonstrate, the work of these six major national programs at the local level does not represent the totality of this country's efforts to help young people who have left our schools prematurely. Many communities do provide literacy classes or skills training courses, but usually not for credit toward high school graduation. Adult education offered by evening schools and public libraries makes a very large con-

tribution, as do numerous religious, civic, and other community-based organizations, many examples of which were noted in Part One. Community colleges, even those overcrowded with burgeoning numbers of high school graduates, often enroll dropouts in both remedial and collegiate-level courses. Overall, however, one cannot avoid the conclusion that the United States gives neither adequate thought nor sufficient resources to the national shame of out-of-school youth.

Following brief descriptions of the six national programs, and contact information to help those who wish to explore the applicability of these programs to their own communities, is a description of the US Department of Labor's Youth Opportunities (YO) Program, which played such a seminal role in the recent dropout prevention and recovery efforts of 36 communities but which, today, is being phased out by the federal government.

CHAPTER 13

Job Corps

Background and Description

Job Corps is a 40-year-old, federally-funded and administered program of the US Department of Labor. Congress enacted Job Corps to help America's economically disadvantaged youth, ages 16-24, overcome the many barriers to employment and self-sufficiency. It is the largest federal employment training program for the nation's most impoverished and vulnerable youth.

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 ("The War on Poverty") established Job Corps. Today, Title I-C of the Workforce Investment Act authorizes the program. About 65,000 young people enroll each year, joining the two million youth Job Corps has served since its inception.

The majority (88%) of Job Corps sites are residential; meaning students live at the centers while enrolled. Youth do not need to participate for a fixed amount of time, as Job Corps has an open-entry/open-exit policy. Instruction is individualized. Students work at their own pace and leave the program when they have achieved an appropriate level of mastery. Participants average 11.2 months in the program.

Job Corps employs a comprehensive career training and youth development approach combining academic, vocational, and employability skills; social competencies through classroom instruction; community service; hands-on practical learning environments; and support services to prepare youth for employment and responsible citizenship. Job Corps' components include:

- Diagnostic testing of reading and math levels upon entry
- Comprehensive academic programs, including reading, math, high school diploma, and General Education Development (GED) certificate attainment
- Workplace communications
- Occupational exploration
- Individualized career planning
- Competency-based vocational training
- Employability, social skills and cultural awareness training

- Regular student progress evaluations
- Lodging, meals and clothing
- Health care (including medical and dental care, substance abuse programs, and health education)
- Student government and leadership programs
- English as a Second Language instruction
- Basic living allowances
- On-site child care support (available at 22 centers)
- Counseling and related support services
- Driver education
- Recreation programs and nonvocational activities
- Post-program placement and transitional support

Ninety-four of the 122 current Job Corps centers (two more are under development) are operated by 27 private for-profit contractors and nonprofit organizations. The US Departments of Agriculture and Interior run the other 28 centers. All centers are subject to a high degree of federal direction with substantial regulations and contractual oversight to assure quality performance. All Job Corps centers include the following features:

- Students must meet standard eligibility criteria: 16-24 years old; US citizen or legal resident; low-income; and ready, willing, and able to participate fully in an educational environment
- A defined set of core competencies in academic, vocational, information technology, employability, and independent living skills that represent the fundamental skills students need to secure and maintain employment
- Standardized systems for financial reporting, data collection, student benefits and accountability
- Nationally-established performance outcomes, goals and quality expectations

At each site, however, training approaches and implementation methods vary. This flexibility allows site managers to tailor their service components and delivery methods to meet individual student and employer needs. Vocational training is offered in over 100 occupations in a range of industries, including automotive, business technology, construction, and health care.

Employers, both large and small, have increasingly looked to Job Corps as a source of trainable and adaptable entry-level workers ready to build

life-long careers. Some of Job Corps' better-known National Employer Partners are: AAMCO Transmissions, HCR Manor Care, Jiffy Lube, Roto-Rooter Plumbing, Sears, and Walgreens. Particular Job Corps centers also enjoy regional partnership agreements with American Hotel and Lodging Association, Cisco Systems, CVS Pharmacies, Roadway Express, State Farm Insurance, Toyota Motors, US Coast Guard, US Navy, and US Chamber of Commerce.

Potential Job Corps participants apply to join through an Outreach and Admissions (OA) counselor working in one of several 100 contracted OA centers around the country. These OA counselors review applications to determine eligibility. Due to the residential nature of the Corps, a decision regarding the enrollment of an applicant must take into consideration previous behavioral problems. Once accepted, youth must sign a commitment to remain drug- and violence-free while in the Corps and are then assigned to a specific Job Corps center and a start date. The location of the center is based on the participant's home address and particular vocational interest. Job Corps provides transportation to reach the assigned center. While at the center, young people participate in comprehensive, career-oriented training and work-based learning, as well as academic instruction to gain new skills and increase employability.

Currently, 122 Job Corps campuses located in 48 states and the District of Columbia serve over 60,500 new participants. The typical Job Corps student is 19 years old, has not completed high school, reads below the 8th grade level, has never held a full-time job, and comes from an economically disadvantaged family. Of the youth, 59.1% are male and 40.9% are female; 74.3% of all residents have no high school

credential and 31.5% were on public assistance at entry. In 2003, 48.9% of participants were African American, 28.7% White, 16.9% Hispanic, 3.3% Native Indian, and 2.2% Asian/Pacific Islander.

Evaluation

The 2001 Survey of Job Corps by Mathematica showed that the program met its goal of "attracting eligible young adults, teaching them the skills they need to become employable and independent, and placing them in meaningful jobs or further education." Mathematica found that participants spent about 1,000 hours (25 weeks) more in education and training than their peers who did not enroll in Job Corps. Mathematica reported that Job Corps had a large effect on the award of credentials that it emphasizes most—the GED and vocational certificates. However, Job Corps had little effect on college attendance and completion with less than 2% of participants obtaining a two- or four-year college degree.

With regard to post-graduation employment and earnings, Job Corps participants earn more, work a greater amount of hours, and receive slightly more benefits than nonparticipants. The program was found to reduce the amount of public assistance and the rate of arrests and convictions as well as incarceration time. Approximately 29% of participants were arrested during the 48-month follow-up period compared to 33% of nonparticipants.

In Program Year 2003, Job Corps had one of the highest placement rates among the nation's job training programs. Ninety percent of all graduates obtained jobs, enlisted in the military, or enrolled in education programs; 39,607 students completed vocational training, and 20,975 obtained a high school diploma or GED. A recent study found that for every dollar Job Corps spends in its local area (through

Five-Year Performance Summary of Student Outcomes (by program year)

	PY 1999	PY 2000	PY 2001	PY 2002	PY 2003
Entered Employment	83%	84%	80%	77%	79%
Enrolled in Education	6%	7%	10%	10%	11%
Total Reported Placements	88%	91%	90%	87%	90%
Average Placement Wage	\$7.49	\$7.97	\$7.96	\$8.03	\$8.08

Source: Job Corps Annual Report Program Year: July 1, 2003—June 30, 2004, US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration

purchasing or contracting for goods and services) an additional \$1.91 in economic activity is generated in the surrounding community. This cause and effect helps explain why the Job Corps enjoys substantial support in the US Congress.

Congress appropriated \$1,429,000,000 for Job Corps for PY 2005. Over the past decade, funding for operating costs has tended to increase from year to year to cover inflationary increases at existing centers as well as the costs of opening new centers. Of the 2003 budget, 44.2% (\$612.0 million) went to student training costs, 37.2% (\$514.7 million) to support services, and 18.6% (\$256.7 million) for administration and national activities. The Job Corps' daily cost per student averaged \$87 in 2003. According to the 2001 Mathematica Survey, the Job Corps costs society about \$14,000 per participant. Program benefits, however, have an approximate value of \$31,000 over a youth's lifetime. Thus, in purely monetary terms, society benefits by roughly \$17,000 for each Job Corps graduate.

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CHAPTER 14

Jobs for America's Graduates

Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG as it is often called) was founded in 1980 in Delaware after a group of that state's leaders, led by then-Governor Pete duPont, identified the need for a comprehensive state-level effort to keep at-risk youth in school to prepare them for employment. JAG has long enjoyed the strong support of public officials and corporate executives. Its first board of directors included founder duPont, Vice President George H.W. Bush, former Vice President Walter Mondale, and five state governors. Leading corporations continue to fund JAG's programs, mentor its students, employ its graduates, provide work-based learning experiences, and serve on local and state JAG boards of directors (or advisory groups) to monitor program relevance and quality.

Today, after a quarter century of testing and upgrading the national model, JAG is widely regarded as one of the most cost-effective solutions for tackling high dropout rates, low academic performance, youth unemployment, and "academic, social, and workforce issues experienced by young people with significant barriers to success."

Since 1980, over 500,000 youth have received JAG Model services. In 2005-2006, the JAG Model will deliver comprehensive services to nearly 32,000 participants in 700 high schools, adult centers, and community colleges in 820 communities in 29 states.

There are four program applications of the JAG Model:

- **The Multiyear Program**, providing students in Grades 9-12 dropout prevention services, work-based learning placements, and 12 months of post-graduation follow-up services (a maximum of 57 months of services)
- **Senior Program**, providing seniors with school-to-career transition services consisting of nine months of in-school services and 12 months of post-graduation follow-up services (for 21 months of in-school and follow-up services)
- **The Middle School Program**, providing students in Grades 7 and 8 academic remediation and personal improvement services
- **The Dropout Recovery Program**, providing out-of-school youth ages 15-21 preparation for a GED

or high school diploma, employability skills, and occupational-specific training through a community college, placement in a quality job leading to career advancement opportunities, and 12 months of post-completion follow-up services (up to 18 months of services)

Student enrollment is approved by an advisory group consisting of administrators, counselors, academic instructors, and career and technical instructors.

JAG program components include:

- Recruitment and Selection
- GED Preparation (or assistance in completing high school graduation requirements)
- WorkKeys Assessments
- Basic Skills Testing (TABE) and Remediation
- Employability, Personal and Leadership Skills Training
- Advisement and Support
- Linkages with the Public Workforce System
- Professional Association (participant-led chapter activities)
- Follow-Up Services (12 months)
 - Employer Marketing
 - Job Development
 - Placement Services
- Accountability (Performance Metrics)

They participate in activity-based classroom instruction where a JAG Specialist teaches and counsels 35 to 45 participants. Classroom learning (individual and group) is delivered using the JAG National Curriculum, consisting of 84 competency-based modules. Eight major module categories include: career development, job attainment, job survival, basic academics, leadership and self-development, personal skills, life survival, and workplace competencies.

The key to JAG's mission and its apparent success is the Job Specialist. The Specialist is trained to administer the highly structured JAG curriculum, but also to establish close bonds with his or her students by acting as teacher, coach, mentor, job placement counselor, role model, and as many JAG graduates attest, as their most committed and reliable friend.

JAG believes its Dropout Recovery Program Application is most effective when JAG Local Affili-

ates meet two criteria. First, they must partner and co-locate with a community college; and second, they must screen recruits and enroll semester cohorts based on student motivation and readiness.

In 2003, JAG asked the US Chamber of Commerce's Statistics and Research Center to survey employers of JAG graduates using funding from an earmark grant provided by the US Department of Labor. Overall, the survey portrayed "a highly successful program...that is valued among JAG employers." Findings from the survey include the following:

- 98% of employers were "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to employ other JAG graduates
- 90% were likely to offer full-time positions
- 86% said JAG graduates "exceeded" or "greatly exceeded" their expectations
- Only 3% of JAG graduates did not meet supervisors' expectations

Funding

JAG emphasizes strong research, evaluation, and accountability. Dr. Andy Sum, Director of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, and arguably the nation's leading researcher and advocate in the youth employment arena, is a sub-contractor for two Congressional Earmark Grants from the US Department of Labor to deliver research reports based on data from JAG's Electronic National Data Management System.

Largely as a result of JAG's dedication to accountability and documenting measurable results and its Congressional and former governor support amassed over 25 years, JAG has received four Congressional earmark grants since 2001, rising from \$742,000 to \$1,000,000 each. These grants were dedicated to strengthening JAG's infrastructure and to the further development of best practices, professional upgrading, and a variety of e-learning tools, handbooks, videos, and new elements of the JAG delivery system.

In serving dropouts, a full-time Program Director (JAG Specialist), one to two part-time GED instructors, and a full-time administrative assistant require a first-year budget of \$175,000 (reducing to \$150,000 in Year 2). This budget equates to \$2,500 per participant when serving 70 youth per year (\$2,150 in Year 2). The public workforce system under the state and federal Workforce Investment Act is the primary source of revenue for JAG's Dropout Recovery Program.

JAG State Organizations report that the per participant cost for the in-school program ranges from \$1,200 to \$1,800 when serving a full student load of 35 to 45 participants in the in-school and follow-up phases with graduates and nongraduates from the prior year.

JAG Program Highlights (2005-06 data rounded to the nearest number)

Total Participants: 31,912

A total of 700 JAG Model programs served 820 communities.

72 (10%) of JAG Model programs served out-of-school youth.

Performance Outcomes for the Class of 2004:

Graduation Rate —Completing the high school diploma or GED	91%
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Positive Outcome Rate —Graduates employed full-time or in military service, postsecondary education, or other training program	73%
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Job Placement Rate —Graduates employed in full-time or part-time work	50%
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Full-time Job Rate —Graduates employed full-time or in military service	62%
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Full-time Placement Rate —Graduates in full-time jobs (civilian and military) plus part-time work combined with postsecondary enrollment	87%
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Further Education Rate —Graduates enrolled full-time or part-time in a two-year, four-year or other postsecondary educational program	41%
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Unable to Contact Rate —Graduates who could not be contacted during the follow-up phase. JAG's goal is to reduce this rate to less than 5%	17%
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Average Hourly Wage	\$6.70
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CHAPTER 15

National Guard Youth ChalleNGe program

The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program intervenes in the lives of at-risk youth, helping them graduate from the program with the values, skills, education, and self-discipline necessary to succeed as positive and productive adults. The ChalleNGe program enrolls unemployed, drug-free, not court-involved high school dropouts ages 16-18. The program's core components emphasize citizenship, academic excellence (GED or high school diploma attainment), life-coping skills, service to community, health and hygiene, job skills training, leadership/followership, and physical fitness.

A two-week PreChalleNGe Phase determines the applicant's potential for successful program completion. Once accepted, the cadet attends a five-month Residential Phase located on a National Guard base, training center, or school campus. Typically, 100 cadets go through the training together. This phase focuses on basic lifestyle changes approached through a rigorous program of education, training, and service to community.

A year-long mentoring relationship follows the Residential Phase. Each year over 7,500 specially-trained adult mentors, some experienced National Guard members, are matched one-on-one with cadets. These mentors usually come from the young people's home communities and help them prepare to reenter that community's life. Mentors offer caring and consistent personal relationships to help youth transition from the structured ChalleNGe environment to self-management. Graduates use this support as they implement the Life Plans developed during the Residential Phase.

The eight core components of the ChalleNGe program are designed to develop the whole person in terms of mind, body, and personal values. Emphasis is on self-discipline, self-esteem, education, and development of healthy lifestyles.

1. **Leadership/Followership**—Cadets identify and apply moral and ethical standards by fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as they live and learn in a structured group environment.
2. **Responsible Citizenship**—In the classroom environment, in the student government process,

and through practical experiences within local communities, cadets learn about US government structure and processes and individual rights and responsibilities at the local, state, and national levels.

3. **Service to the Community**—Cadets perform a minimum of 40 hours of service, sometimes through conservation projects. These activities provide additional opportunities for career exploration as well as enhancement of cadets' awareness of community needs.
4. **Life-Coping Skills**—Cadets gain increased self-esteem and self-discipline through a combination of classroom activities and a structured living environment. Group discussions and classroom activities give cadets an opportunity to develop individual strategies and coping mechanisms for managing personal finances and dealing with emotions, such as anger, grief, frustration, and stress.
5. **Physical Fitness**—All ChalleNGe Programs conduct a physical fitness program using the President's ChalleNGe, a battery of physical tests based on data collected from a variety of sources.
6. **Health and Hygiene**—Cadets examine their physical health and well-being through a holistic approach that studies both the physical and mental effects of substance abuse and sexually-transmitted diseases. In addition, cadets learn the physical and emotional benefits of proper nutrition in classes and structured group discussions.
7. **Job Skills**—Cadets explore careers through career assessments, interest inventories, job-specific skills orientation and awareness, and training in area vocational centers. Specific classroom activities focus on developing individual resumes, completing job applications, preparing for job interviews, and conducting mock interviews.
8. **Academic Excellence**—All ChalleNGe participants attend daily academic classes to prepare them for the General Education Development (GED) credential, a high school diploma, or increased math and reading comprehension. Progress is assessed using the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Six sites award a diploma

through an agreement with their local high schools or charter schools.

ChalleNGe operates 30 programs in 25 states and Puerto Rico. Current residential enrollment is about 6,800 youth annually. Four-fifths of the participants are male. Some Congressional advocates hope to extend ChalleNGe to all 50 states, serving as many as 20,000 new mentoring relationships annually. Approximately a quarter of cadets are White and about one-half are African American or Latino.

Funding

ChalleNGe is considered a cost-effective program at \$14,000 for the complete 17-month program, including both the Residential Phase and Post-Residential Phase of year-long mentoring. The average daily program cost is \$27.45 per youth. This cost compares favorably with \$117.00 for adjudicated youths' residential programs and \$162.00 for incarceration. Under its 1998 authorization, 60% of ChalleNGe's funding comes from the US Federal Government and 40% from the states under agreements with the governors. The FY 2005 federal appropriation, including administration, totals over \$72 million. The states invest \$40.5 million of their own resources.

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National Guard Youth Challenge Program Highlights

Over 61,000 cadets have graduated from the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program in the past 12 years. Of these, over 42,000 earned their GED or high school diploma while in the program. Of the FY 2004 cadets who successfully completed the Residential Phase, graduates raised their reading levels by 1.7 grades and their math scores by 1.8 grades. Other outcomes for the FY 2004 cadets included:

- 70% completed requirements for a GED or high school diploma.
- 590,665 hours of conservation projects and service to community activities were performed with a value of over \$3 million.
- 70% of cadets reported positive placement activities in employment, the military, and postsecondary education at the conclusion of the year-long mentoring.

CHAPTER 16

Opportunities Industrialization Centers

Under the banner of “Helping People Help Themselves,” Opportunities Industrialization Centers (OIC) has been moving people from poverty and welfare to self-sufficiency, employment, and empowerment for over 41 years. Founded by the late Reverend Dr. Leon H. Sullivan in 1964, OIC has its origins in the civil rights movement, the War on Poverty, and the urban unrest of the 1960s when Sullivan rallied 400 ministers in Philadelphia to create employment opportunities for low-income residents in the inner city. Together, they concluded that equal employment opportunity could not be a reality until people were first “qualified educationally, vocationally, motivationally, and attitudinally in a ‘holistic’ approach combining job training and personal development.”

From that turbulent time, OIC evolved into a leading national and international education and training model, having served over three million people worldwide and more than 70,000 in Philadelphia alone. OIC operates 60 affiliate programs in 33 states and the District of Columbia, funded by corporate contributions and federal grants from the US Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Justice. Another 42 OIC affiliates operate in 18 countries, including several in Africa, Poland, and the Philippines; together these programs train about 10,000 people annually.

OIC’s philosophy of developing the whole person involves life skills development, fundamental education, job skills training, and employment readiness services. Over 40% of OIC’s students are dropouts, 26% are ages 16-21, 66% are female, and 65% are African American.

OIC’s prototype job training program and international headquarters remain in Philadelphia. The Office of National Literacy Programs manages several programs including the Career & Academic Development Institute (CADI) described in the case study of Philadelphia (See Chapter 12). Other OIC programs follow:

- **The Quantum Opportunity Program (QOP)**^[1] is the foundation of OIC of America’s literacy division. A four-year program for entering 9th grade high-risk youth, QOP offers a curriculum

of education, development, and service activities delivered by caring adults who serve as counselors, mentors, role models, disciplinarians, advocates, and problem-solvers. QOP staff are available around the clock, 365 days per year, throughout the student’s four years in the program and beyond. Its motto is: “Once in QOP, Always in QOP.” The cornerstones of the QOP programs are: **education**—self-paced, computer-assisted instruction, including Internet access and instruction, with heavy emphasis on the fundamentals of reading, writing, math, science, and social studies; **community service**—tutoring elementary students, assisting the homeless and the elderly, cleaning up neighborhoods, and volunteering at local hospitals; and **youth development**—life skills training, job readiness preparation, personal development activities, and cultural enrichment. QOP is particularly attractive to students since it offers financial incentives—stipends and bonuses for participation hours and matching contributions to individual accrual accounts for postsecondary education or advanced skills training.

- **Integrated Career & Education Program (ICEP)** provides a concentration of state-of-the-art educational and functional competencies for older out-of-school youth, complemented by one-on-one counseling, case management, vocational skills training, tuition assistance for college enrollment, and performance-based incentives.
- **Virtual QOP** provides comprehensive education, training, testing, course management, and certification for individuals remanded to juvenile facilities. This population includes youth ages 13–18 who are incarcerated, returning from incarceration, or on probation or parole.
- **Philadelphia Abstinence Education Project** is part of a national initiative facilitated through select OIC affiliates. The Abstinence Education Project utilizes the Families United to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (FUPTP) abstinence-until-marriage curriculum. FUPTP has an 18-year history of combating teen pregnancy through its strong focus on life skills.
- **The QOPlus Program** is geared toward high

achieving graduates of the Career & Academic Development Institute who possess a strong desire to succeed in postsecondary education, including college or the skilled trades.

- **Saturday Morning Alternative Reach and Teach (SMART)** is an alternative for students who may be expelled or transferred to another school. Parents and guardians also participate in SMART to learn methods of establishing constructive dialogue with their children and improving interpersonal relationships.
- **Virtual Academy** operates after hours and targets select high school seniors in need of additional assistance with a core academic subject in order to fulfill their graduation requirements.
- **The Leon H. Sullivan Opportunity Academy** operates the OIC Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship (YDPA) Program. The YDPA program, spearheaded by the US Department of Labor, offers frontline practitioners in human services, such as case managers, job developers, job coaches, youth arts and recreation workers, and other direct service occupations, skills training courses (15 to 30 hours each) in such areas as: case management, coaching, counseling, financial management, corporate planning, motivation, job development strategies, community involvement, team building, and volunteer recruitment and training.

Additional OIC programs include: a YouthBuild site in Racine County, Wisconsin (See Chapter 17 for a description of YouthBuild); EXTRA Learning System in Alexandria, Virginia, a K-12 comprehensive learning and program management system designed by the Remediation and Training Institute and delivered over the Internet via local computer networks; Passport-to-Work in Washington, DC, for out-of-school youth ages 17-21 that utilizes e-learning coupled with teachers providing instruction in basic and occupational skills, work readiness, and job placement culminating in a work experience practicum that allows participants to demonstrate their new skills in a real work environment; School After School for Successful Youth (SASSY) in Menlo Park, California, where students earn up to 10 credits per semester in a vocational elective that develops academic and job skills, health counseling, and access to local public health providers, leadership opportunities, and job development services for holiday and summer employment; and in Rocky Mount, North

Carolina, TEAM (Together, Efficient, Ambitious, Men) and WEBS (Women Empowered by Success) provide opportunities for male and female students ages 16-21 to improve personal image and parenting skills, develop strategies to achieve financial goals and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships through community service projects, resource speakers, and related trips and outings.

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¹ For a description and evaluation of the Quantum Opportunities Program, see *Some Things DO Make a Difference for Youth*. Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum, 1997.

CHAPTER 17

YouthBuild

The mission of YouthBuild is to “unleash the intelligence and positive energy of low-income youth to rebuild their communities and their own lives with a commitment to work, education, family, and citizenship.” In YouthBuild, unemployed and undereducated young people ages 16-24 work toward completion of a GED or high school diploma while learning work and social skills by building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people. YouthBuild programs emphasize leadership development, community service, and the creation of a positive community of adults and youth committed to success.

Local YouthBuild programs are small, supportive communities usually operated by a nonprofit, independent, community-based, or faith-based organization. The program began in 1978 when Dorothy Stoneman, founder and president of YouthBuild USA, asked neighborhood teens in East Harlem how they would improve their community if they had adults supporting them. The students answered, “We’d rebuild the houses. We’d take empty buildings back from the drug dealers and eliminate crime.” Together they formed the Youth Action Program and renovated the first YouthBuild building. They replicated the program in five locations in New York City during the 1980s. In 1990, YouthBuild USA was founded to coordinate national replication.

YouthBuild USA serves as the national intermediary and support center for local YouthBuild programs. It orchestrates advocacy for public funding, gives guidance and quality assurance in program implementation, offers leadership opportunities for youth and staff, supports research to understand best practices, and distributes grants and loans, from government and philanthropies, to YouthBuild affiliates. YouthBuild USA also contributes to the broader youth and community development fields in order to diminish poverty. The YouthBuild Coalition is supported by more than 1,000 organizations in 49 states.

Program

YouthBuild participants spend 6 to 12 months in the program (averaging 8.2 months), dividing their time

between the construction site and the YouthBuild alternative school. Program components include:

- **Housing**—Students construct or rehabilitate homes for homeless and low-income people in their communities. Projects range from restoring multiunit buildings to constructing new homes. Students are paid a stipend for their construction work, which varies by local site.
- **Education**—Students prepare for high school diplomas, GEDs, vocational school, or college. The curriculum integrates academics with life skills. Classes are small, which allows for one-on-one attention to students.
- **Job Training**—Students build sound work habits as well as decision-making and time-management skills. They develop career plans and prepare for job interviews. At the job site they receive training from qualified construction instructors.
- **Leadership Development**—Participants learn to advocate for issues that concern them and their communities, and to take responsibility for themselves and their families. Students share in the governance of their program through an elected policy committee.
- **Counseling**—Counseling and referrals are offered to address such issues as child care, transportation, or substance abuse. Students are assigned a counselor, with whom they meet regularly.
- **Graduate Support**—Graduates have access to resources and support to assist them as they advance their careers, go to college, build assets, and become role models.

In 2004, there were more than 200 YouthBuild programs in 44 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, engaging approximately 7,000 young adults annually. Since 1994, more than 47,000 YouthBuild students have produced over 14,000 units of low-income housing in 226 of America’s poorest communities. Average participation in the program is 8.2 months.

Twenty-one YouthBuild programs have established public charter schools or other cooperative arrangements with their local school districts (e.g., loan of public school teachers). Obtaining a charter enables a program to access state education dollars

to support a high school program. The Philadelphia YouthBuild Charter School is an excellent example of such an arrangement. (See Chapter 12.)

Nationally, 73% of YouthBuild students are men and 27% are women. In 2004, the demographic breakdown of students was: 47% African American, 23% White, 24% Latino, 3% Native American, and 2% Asian American. In addition, 28% of YouthBuild students were parents. Eighty-eight percent of YouthBuild students entered the program without their GED or diploma, 32% had been adjudicated, and 28% were receiving public assistance prior to joining YouthBuild. The average reading level at entrance was 7.2 grades.

Despite these odds, as of 2004 59% of participants completed the program and 80% of graduates went on to postsecondary education or employment. Average program attendance was 82% and 33% of those enrollees without a diploma or a GED earned one. At graduation, initial pay averaged \$8.15 an hour.

Funding

YouthBuild is a public-private partnership, currently funded about 50% from the US Federal Government, 35% from foundations, 9% from corporations, and 6% from donations. Each YouthBuild program secures its own funding, generally a mix of government (federal, state, and local) and private support. Federal support for YouthBuild is authorized under Subtitle D of Title IV of the 1992 Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act. In FY 2004, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded \$54 million in grants to 93 local YouthBuild programs, 24 of which launched new YouthBuild sites. Grants for FY 2005 are pending. YouthBuild USA, with an annual budget exceeding \$9 million, receives major support from the Ford, Charles S. Mott, Bill & Melinda Gates, and W.K. Kellogg Foundations. It has received major public grants and contracts from US Department of Labor, US Department of Health and Human Services, HUD, and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

In June 2004, YouthBuild USA received \$12.2 million from the US Department of Labor's Incarcerated Youth Reentry Program. The two-year award was then granted again by YouthBuild USA to 30 local YouthBuild programs. Each of the 30 programs received the funds because they admit a specified

number of students with criminal records into the programs, for a total of 325 youth per year. Some of the students are referred by the courts; some enter directly from jail; others find their own way to YouthBuild. YouthBuild USA provides training, technical assistance, and data management for all 30 sites. The programs themselves track the outcomes of all students, both graduates and early leavers, for five years.

In 2003, YouthBuild USA lost its national-direct funding from AmeriCorps, but was awarded \$4,798,132 for its 2005-2006 AmeriCorps program to support 1,665 members. YouthBuild USA also receives a \$700,000 grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services for the YouthBuild National Individual Development Account (IDA) Program. IDA fosters the economic independence and leadership of low-income YouthBuild graduates by matching their savings. Under a partnership between YouthBuild USA and local YouthBuild programs, YouthBuild USA raises three-quarters of the match, offers technical assistance, and provides overall program management. Local affiliates select the IDA participants and raise \$1,000 for each of them. Under the program:

1. A YouthBuild graduate saves \$800.
2. The graduate's local YouthBuild program raises a \$1,000 gift.
3. YouthBuild USA's National IDA Program matches this gift with another \$1,000 given by individual donors.
4. The combined local program and YouthBuild USA gifts are matched with a \$2,000 grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services.
5. The combined \$4,000 results in a 5-to-1 match for the graduate's savings for further education, starting a small business, or other means of securing financial independence.

The average cost per YouthBuild participant is \$20,000 a year, including stipends for work performed. This is less than other full-time options for unemployed young adults, including such residential programs as Job Corps, boot camps, prison, and many colleges.

The nine YouthBuild programs in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama all were mobilized for relief and rehabilitation work in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. An additional 20 organizations in these three states have petitioned for funds

to start local YouthBuild affiliates. Unfortunately, YouthBuild gets three to six applicants for every student opening; in 2005 the programs had to turn away 900 youth in Philadelphia, 600 in Newark, 400 in East Harlem, and 100 in Springfield, Massachusetts, among others.

External Evaluations

Life After YouthBuild: 900 Graduates Reflect on Their Lives, Dreams, and Experiences, conducted by researchers at Brandeis and Temple Universities was released in June 2004. This two-pronged national research project surveyed 882 YouthBuild graduates from more than 60 local programs and conducted in-depth interviews with a cross-section of 57 randomly-selected graduates from eight programs. The study was designed to examine the long-term successes and challenges of YouthBuild graduates. Key findings include:

- 65% believe they will live an average of 32 years longer than they had expected to live before joining YouthBuild
- 75% are currently enrolled in postsecondary education or in jobs averaging \$10 an hour
- 76% are receiving none of three government supports (food stamps, welfare, or unemployment benefits)
- 68% are registered to vote
- 47% have voted
- 92% voiced positive emotions, a solid self-image, and optimism about the future

YouthBuild USA was named one of America's 100 Best Charities by Worth Magazine in 2002. To honor the success of YouthBuild, Dorothy Stoneman was awarded the prestigious MacArthur "genius" Fellowship in 1996 and the Independent Sector's John Gardner Leadership Award in 2000.

(For a closer look at YouthBuild-like programs, see the profile of the YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School in Philadelphia (Chapter 12), Civic Works in Baltimore (Chapter 8), The Youth Employment Partnership in Oakland (Chapter 6), Improved Solutions for Urban Systems in Dayton (Chapter 1), American Youth Works in Austin (Chapter 3), and YouthBuild Louisville in Louisville (Chapter 2).

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Additional Resource

Stoneman, D. (2003) Flip the script: Self-sufficiency and fulfillment for all. In Lewis, A. (Ed.), *Shaping the future of American Youth* (pp. 41-49). Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum.

CHAPTER 18

Youth Service and Conservation Corps

Youth Service and Conservation Corps are nonprofit programs that engage youth and young adults (ages 16-25) in full-time community service, training, and education. Today's corps are the heirs of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the 1933-1942 Depression-era program that engaged and supported 3.5 million young men in conservation and natural resource development. They planted 2.5 billion trees, protected 40 million acres of farmland from erosion, drained 248,000 acres of swampland, replanted almost one-million acres of grazing land, built 125,000 miles of roads, fought fires, and created 800 state parks and 52,000 acres of campgrounds. The tangible results of the CCC are seen today in virtually every state in America. But its largest legacy was the hope it provided to young men and their families during very difficult times. The CCC was disbanded in 1942, after the advent of World War II.

Since the late 1950s, the US Federal Government has experimented with comparatively large investments in a Youth Conservation Corps and a Young Adult Conservation Corps, the latter enjoying an annual budget of about \$260 million. The Reagan administration ended such efforts and the youth corps torch was passed to the states. The California Conservation Corps, which started in 1976 and eventually expanded to 11 centers, was a cutting-edge state investment. Other states and, in the 1980s, urban areas fashioned their own corps models with both public funds and substantial foundation support.

Youth corps were a major part of the 1990s community service movement under both George H.W. Bush's and Bill Clinton's presidential administrations with about 20% of AmeriCorps members being composed of service and conservation corps.

Since 1985, over 550,000 young people have completed service in youth corps. Currently, the nation's 108 corps operate in communities across 36 states and the District of Columbia. Of these, 90% operate year-round, and 10% are seasonal. Private nonprofit agencies operate 60% of the corps, while

40% are state or local government agencies. In 2004-2005, the corps enrolled 23,400 young people (59% male, 41% female) making them the country's largest full-time, nonfederal system for youth development. Today, corpsmembers provide their communities with 12.9 million hours of service annually in year-round and summer programs. Over 124,000 adult volunteers work with the corps and contribute an added 2.4 million hours of service.

Corps exist to meet community needs. Some corps tutor children, and some fight forest fires. Others carry out a wide range of projects on public lands. Still others improve the quality of life in low-income communities by renovating deteriorated housing, doing environmental cleanup, creating parks and gardens, and staffing afterschool programs. Corps reduce the backlog of projects on public lands, including National Parks and National Forests, improve the quality of recreational trails and make other transportation enhancements, help communities cope with natural disasters, promote the reintegration of young offenders into their communities, build "green" houses and provide energy weatherization to low-income communities, assist in the transformation of closed or downsizing military facilities into community resources, provide pathways to higher education for corpsmembers, and bring educational and youth development opportunities to Indian reservations and other Native communities.

In the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, youth corps from California, Washington State, Minnesota, Montana, and New York sent teams to Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama to help with disaster relief.

2004 Corpsmember Characteristics

Ethnicity	Percent
Caucasian	43%
African American	24%
Latino	23%
Multi-racial, Native American and Asian	10%
Level of Education Upon Entry	Percent
Lacked a high school diploma	55%
Earned a high school diploma or a GED	22%
Attended some college	17%
Held a college degree	6%
Other Characteristics	Percent
Family income below the poverty line	64%
Previously court-involved	30%
Previously in foster care	10%
Average Age	20 years

Guided by adult leaders who serve as mentors, role models, technical trainers, and supervisors, crews of 8 to 12 corpsmembers and one team leader carry out a wide range of conservation, urban infrastructure improvement, and human service projects. In return for their efforts, corpsmembers receive a living allowance, classroom training to improve basic competencies, a chance to earn a GED or high school diploma, experiential and environmental service-learning-based education, generic and technical skills training, a wide range of support services, and, in many cases, an AmeriCorps post-service educational award of up to \$4,725. (There were 5,394 full or partial awards from 2001-2003 and 3,134 thus far in the three-year award cycle running until 2006. Many more corpsmembers chose to enter the workforce after graduation from the corps.)

Corps are versatile, cost-effective programs that allow young people to accomplish important projects while developing employment and citizenship skills. Sally Prouty, President of the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (NASCC) and former head of the Ohio Civilian Conservation Corps, commented on the diversity of youth corps programs

around the country: "Successful corps share common core elements: they build on corpsmembers' strengths; provide an environment in which every corpsmember can experience success; offer consistent contact and nurturing with a caring adult; stress leadership development, creative problem-solving, the ability to work as a member of a team; and focus on the future and what can be." Together, these elements give any corpsmembers a "second chance" to succeed in life.

Evaluation

A rigorous multisite control group evaluation by Abt Associates and Brandeis University underscored the value of corps for communities and participants. *Promising Strategies for Young People and Their Communities* reported significant employment and earnings gains by corpsmembers compared to the control group. Positive outcomes were particularly striking for young African American men who also exhibited "increased social and personal responsibility and higher educational aspirations, and were more likely to vote." Arrest rates dropped by one-third among all corpsmembers; out-of-wedlock pregnancy rates fell among female corpsmembers. Overall, the corps generated \$1.60 in immediate benefits for every \$1.00 of costs. A second generation Youth Corps study will be underway in 2006 testing the hypothesis that corps participation generates positive and measurable behavioral and attitudinal outcomes in educational attainment, employment success, workplace skills, civic engagement, and avoidance of risky behaviors. Funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, it will be the largest-ever study of national service programs.

Funding

Unlike the original Civilian Conservation Corps, modern corps are state and local programs that do not enjoy a dedicated source of federal funds. As a result, corps must be highly entrepreneurial organizations, skilled at accessing diverse resources. In 2004-2005, corps budgets nationwide totaled \$303 million. They derived 20% of their funds from a variety of federal sources, 37% from state, county, and municipal appropriations, and 7% from foundations and corporate grants. Some 36% of revenues came from sponsored projects or fee-for-service contracts with public and private nonprofit agencies, in which corps met the test of the marketplace.

The National Association of Service and Conservation Corps was formed in 1985 when the nation's first 24 directors banded together to advocate for support and to establish a clearinghouse of information on how to start and run "best practice" corps. Now 20 years old, NASCC is the voice of the Corps movement in Washington. It advocates for the growth and sustainability of the nation's programs for youth development by advancing quality programs, providing program assessment, training, and technical assistance, and administering and building partnerships to support corps. NASCC is also one of the principal creators and advocates for the Campaign for Youth (www.campaignforyouth.org)

NASCC operates an AmeriCorps national direct grant, "Rural Response," to increase the capacity of rural areas in five states to do disaster prevention, mitigation, and relief. It also runs the large, multisite AmeriCorps Education Award Program, ensuring that graduating corpsmembers have the opportunity to access higher education or technical training. In conjunction with the National Park Service it operates the Public Lands Corps, which distributes \$10.3 million to 22 corps nationwide to carry out visitor enhancement and backlogged maintenance in National Parks.

In 2003, NASCC completed a four-year \$3.8 million national Welfare-to-Work project funded by the US Department of Labor. The project engaged eight corps in four states that moved young adults from welfare rolls and lives of dependence into a corps experience and toward gainful employment and independent lives. Project participants realized significant gains in post-Corps job placement, employment retention and earnings. The Welfare-to-Work project built on NASCC's experience with a five-year, foundation-funded Corps-to-Career Initiative that involved 26 Corps in 10 states. That initiative helped catapult corpsmembers into the labor market, higher education, living-wage jobs, and educational achievement.

(For a closer look at Youth Corps, see the profile of the East Bay Conservation Corps in Oakland, CA (Chapter 6), Civic Works in Baltimore, MD (Chapter 8), The Work Group in Camden, NJ (Chapter 10), and American Youthworks in Austin, TX (Chapter 3).

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CHAPTER 19

Youth Opportunity Grants¹

In May, 2000, the US Department of Labor awarded sizable Youth Opportunity (YO) Grants to 36 high poverty urban, rural, and Native American communities. All of these distressed communities are characterized by high rates of dropout, youth unemployment, juvenile crime, violence, and gang activity. More than 150 communities had competed in a highly competitive process. The successful applicants included 24 urban areas (including Baltimore, Louisville, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Portland, and Tucson studied in this report), six rural and six Native American communities.

With these awards, which totaled about \$1 billion over five years, the Department of Labor launched the YO movement to foster collaboration both within and among communities and to advance the field of preparing youth in high poverty communities for successful transition to adulthood and labor market success.²

Youth Opportunity Grants were intended to address the needs of youth ages 14-21 living in Empowerment Zones (EZs) or other high poverty areas. YO grants were substantial, ranging from a low of \$3.1 million in the Native American community of Grand Traverse to \$43.8 million in urban areas like Baltimore, Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Houston. The grants were highly catalytic in launching important collaborations in these communities to connect systems, leverage resources, and develop comprehensive strategies for reaching young people and redirecting their paths.

The basic idea behind YO was to demonstrate whether, by saturating relatively small geographic areas with enough leveraged resources and by connecting substantial numbers of youth to high quality programs and supports, the education and employment outcomes for youth could be dramatically improved. Unlike traditional federal programs that have strict eligibility requirements, all youth ages 14-21 who resided within the boundaries of the target areas were eligible for service. Emphasis was also placed on outreach to older out-of-school and out-of-work youth.

Youth Opportunity Grants were a central part of the federal employment training system overhaul en-

visioned in the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). The 36 YO communities were deemed the vanguard of what was to be a redesigned national delivery system for disadvantaged youth. With WIA legislative reforms in place focusing on more comprehensive youth programming, it was anticipated that Congressional appropriations would continue and perhaps be expanded beyond the original 36 communities.

Such was not to be. Appropriations for the Youth Opportunity Grants were cut dramatically in 2003, allowing only enough funding to honor the five-year obligation to the original sites. No new grants were awarded. In July 2005, local YO communities began the process of transitioning, phasing down, or closing out operations.

Youth Opportunity Grants in Action

Youth Opportunity Grants were administratively and programmatically very complex to implement because of the broad range of services that had to be put in place and the scale of the operation. The Department of Labor awarded its grants to local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) which then identified the most suitable administrative entities in their communities. This resulted in considerable variation in the administrative arrangements for the YO grants. In some communities, like Baltimore, Boston, San Francisco, and Lumber River, the WIB itself administered the YO grant. In other communities, entities like the United Way, YMCA, or other well-established local nonprofit organizations took the lead administrative role. The lead entity presided over the planning and implementation process that brought key segments of the community together to leverage funding, map resources, broker arrangements across youth-serving systems, design delivery strategies, and plan for ultimate sustainability. (As an example, see the discussion of the Philadelphia Youth Network in Chapter 12.)

Youth Opportunity grantees created considerable capacity in a relatively short period. More than 90,000 youth were enrolled over the five-year period. Ninety-five percent were minority and 48% were out of school. Sites were required to put in place a com-

prehensive mix of programs and activities, access to services, and personal supports. All sites had several common components: Youth Opportunity Centers, a core case management staff, prevention strategies for in-school youth, alternative programming for out-of-school youth, work experience and career exploration, youth development and leadership activities, and placement and follow-up support. While all YO sites had the same components, the delivery model was far from monolithic. The Youth Opportunity delivery system in each community was uniquely tailored to build on the strength of the delivery capacity of the local providers, employers, education entities, and youth-serving systems.

There was tremendous variety in delivery approaches and innovation, as shown in the following examples:

1. **Youth Opportunity Centers:** Each site established at least one physical location (most had multiple) that was easily accessible and identifiable as the Youth Opportunity point of access. In total, 204 Youth Opportunity Centers or satellites were created. These centers were safe, “youth-friendly” environments that served as the focal points for case management, information and referral, and recreational and developmental activity. Most of the YO centers were equipped with computer learning labs and connected with the WIA One-Stop Centers for access to job and career information.
2. **Intensive Case Management:** The YO grant required that each site maintain a low student-to-staff ratio to ensure the desired individualized attention. Each site assembled a core staff averaging 40 to 60 youth specialists to maintain low caseloads and assist youth with the development of individualized development plans; connect them with appropriate education support programming; assist youth in accessing health, childcare, housing and other needed support services, as well as with career planning and access to internships, occupational training, and postsecondary opportunities. The youth development staff was accountable for tracking progress for each young person through program completion and for two years beyond.

Hiring and retaining high quality youth development staff was critical to the success of the Youth Opportunity strategy. The Department of Labor launched the Youth Development

Practitioners Institute, which provided ongoing training for a substantial number of the YO staff. Several local sites like Baltimore, Hartford, Seattle, and San Diego developed practitioner institutes or academies to upgrade skills and ensure the quality of their front-line staff.

3. **Dropout Prevention and Intervention Strategies:** Increasing graduation rates and college matriculation rates was an important goal for the YO program. Almost all YO sites developed formal relationships with their local school districts to put supportive services in place to increase school retention, academic achievement, and graduation rates. A CLASP survey of 22 YO sites found that 91% had formal arrangements with their local districts and 82% received dedicated funding or other resources from their school district for YO program activity. Most sites instituted wraparound support strategies for struggling students and youth in high-risk situations. They also implemented programs to enhance the youth’s academic skills and preparedness for college. Examples of typical interventions employed across the sites include:

- Cleveland’s Quantum Opportunity Program, Baltimore’s Futures Plus, Seattle’s In-School Connection Program, and Brockton’s In-School Access Center all provided students with school-based staff support, intensive advocacy, academic support, career exploration, cultural activities, and connections to community service or work experience.
- Memphis established the YO! Memphis academy offering College Prep Curriculum, Tutoring/Intensive Test Prep, an Honors Program, and College Credit Courses.
- Several local districts or colleges created special academies or occupationally-focused programs. Houston, Tampa, Cleveland, and Baltimore all had programs focused on Fire and Rescue careers. Lumber River established broadcast television academies in the Robeson County Career Center and a Mixed Media Program at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. In Tampa, the school district created Summer Academies to provide occupational training in areas such as Fire Rescue and Certified Nursing Assistant. The Tucson Medical Center provided YO students with entry training for the Health Care field.

- Hartford strengthened the School Prevention Teams in several schools, linking school attendance and achievement data with the YO database to provide real-time data to better manage positive outcomes and to establish a college preparatory program that prepared almost 300 young people for college entry.
 - In Los Angeles, College Career Centers were housed at the Youth Opportunity Centers to allow students to research colleges, speak with recruiters and staff, access ACT/SAT preparation, and explore possibilities in postsecondary education.
4. **Alternative Education Connections:** YO grantees were required to enroll out-of-school youth without a diploma in an appropriate education option. YO communities demonstrated considerable creativity in addressing this daunting challenge. Most communities built upon the relationships with their school district or their existing alternative education deliverers to implement or expand innovative approaches for connecting dropouts or struggling students. Los Angeles and Boston partnered with their preexisting networks of community-based alternative schools.
- The Seattle Interagency School provided open-entry enrollment, mentoring, community service, individual assessment and instruction, and academic remediation for youth who had dropped out of school, were homeless or street-gang involved, or were low skilled and unsuccessful in other programs.
 - Baltimore developed a “funds following students” credit recovery program for out-of-school youth. The YO program partnered with Baltimore City Public Schools to re-engage high school dropouts, reenroll them in community-based diploma programs run by contract providers. Youth are able to earn a regular high school diploma in a small, community-based learning environment suitable to the students’ academic needs, individual strengths, and circumstances. (See Chapter 8.)
 - San Diego established a charter school on site at the YO Center to provide small classroom and individualized instruction and academic guidance to complete the high school diploma. The Cleveland YO program collaborated with the Cleveland Municipal School District to create a Twilight School for youth who had dropped out. Designed to be a full-service high school leading to a diploma, Twilight offers a nontraditional approach to teaching that allows young people to earn their high school diploma at their own pace.
 - In Tucson, Las Artes combined education with training and work experience in the creation of mosaic tile public art. Youth learned professional production skills, team work, and self-motivation while they also progressed through eight-week modules to achieve their GED. (See Chapter 9). The Tucson YO program also brokered multiple arrangements with the school district, vendors, and the local community college to create a broad range of training opportunities for out-of-school youth that are accessible through a voucher system.
5. **Continuum of Youth Development Activities:** YO activities helped young people develop not only their academic and work place skills but also their personal skills, leadership skills, and sense of civic responsibility. YO sites created an expansive set of offerings including sports leagues, drama clubs, arts and cultural activities, peer-to-peer support groups, college tours, public speaking, formal leadership training, and entrepreneurship training. As part of the planning, youth were involved in community resource mapping, surveying, peer counseling and recruiting, and community service projects at many of the sites. Most sites developed vehicles for youth to participate in decision-making and contribute personal input. Several sites engaged youth in facility design, staff selection, and design and publication of newsletters.
6. **Work Experience and Community Service:** Overall, 25,943 YO participants had either an internship or a subsidized work experience; 23,771 were involved in community service; and 27,388 were placed in short-term unsubsidized jobs. YO activities were well anchored in the workforce development system in most of the communities, thus taking advantage of that system’s experience in creating quality work experiences and playing the intermediary role in engaging employers. Several communities responding to the CLASP survey—Tucson, Boston, Lumber River, Brockton, Kansas City, Denver, Philadelphia, Houston, and Los Angeles—reported considerable success in accessing paid intern-

ships in the private sector.

7. **Employer Involvement:** Two-thirds of the YO communities reported considerable success in either accessing private sector internships, creating customized training opportunities, or establishing effective intermediary relationships to coordinate access to jobs or business resources. All of the YO communities worked actively to engage businesses in planning and in opening up opportunities for both in-school and out-of-school youth. A 2003 survey of YO site directors found that the communities had gained access beyond the retail and food service establishments that traditionally hire youth. New partnerships with the health industry were the most prominent, followed by retail, tourism and entertainment (not including hotels), communications and technology, banking, manufacturing, warehousing, business support, and hospitality. Most of these partnerships yielded internships, exposure, business participation in job readiness preparation, and opportunities for placements.

Accomplishments

The question of whether the Youth Opportunity grants had the intended impact on increasing graduation rates and youth employment rates community wide awaits the results of the formal US Department of Labor evaluation. But there were clearly short-run accomplishments for the communities and the youth involved:

1. YO impacted the way communities organized their systems and resources to respond to the needs of high-risk youth. The Center for Law and Social Policy's (CLASP) survey showed that 78% of the communities responding blended staff and/or resources from at least three youth-serving systems, including the local school district, juvenile justice, postsecondary education, WIA one-stops, and the TANF system. Sixty-two percent of the YO sites had formal relationships with the juvenile justice system. Many of those system connections and program innovations will remain in place beyond the expiration of federal YO funding, though not at the same magnitude.
2. The Youth Opportunity experience contributed to the increased professionalism of the youth work delivery system. The constant focus on upgrading staff skills, creation of institutes and

academies, development of a youth practitioner apprenticeship program, and peer-to-peer collaboration across sites increased the expertise of many youth practitioners and the caliber of the pool of youth workers in these communities.

3. The communities were successful in engaging a substantial portion of the youth in the target area, in particular out-of-school youth. The Department of Labor estimates that the YO program had a penetration rate of 42% of all eligible youth and 62% of out-of-school youth. The YO saturation approach appears to have worked well in terms of attracting and connecting traditionally hard to find and serve groups.
4. The Youth Opportunity sites were successful in dramatically increasing youth's participation in academic support or education reengagement activities. Noteworthy are the activities devoted to postsecondary preparation and matriculation. Placements in education activities included:

■ Alternative Schools	3,895
■ 2-year colleges	7,224
■ 4-year colleges	6,045
■ College/SAT preparation	17,856
■ Reading/Math remediation	22,405
■ GED preparation	15,210
5. In terms of employment and placement outcomes:

■ 92,007 youth were served by the 36 YO sites
■ 28,302 were placed in short-term unsubsidized jobs
■ 24,021 were placed in long-term unsubsidized employment
■ 23,478 were engaged in occupational training

The Youth Opportunities Grant program represents the most promising federal effort to date for mobilizing the human and financial resources of troubled, generally low-income communities. As noted, particularly in the profiles of Philadelphia and Baltimore, YO grants enabled dynamic local leadership to align their educational and human resource agencies to provide better and more comprehensive support for disadvantaged youth making the transition to the labor market and to adult civic life. YO grants enabled young people to know that adults were committed to their success, whether in traditional systems or by developing innovative alternative pathways into the mainstream. Moreover, YO grants showed that communities can successfully

concentrate resources, thereby bringing services for disadvantaged youth to considerable scale and impact in those neediest neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the federal government's decision to terminate the existing YO grants after only three years of development and maturation showed, once again, just how vulnerable youth recovery and reconnection efforts are to the whims of inconsistent, even ephemeral, public policy.

While we await the federally-funded evaluation of the YO program by Decision Information Resources of Houston, Texas, we can already conclude that the YO approach has great merit and that three years is much too short a period to design and implement an intervention of such sweeping scope and national importance.

¹ Research for this chapter was conducted by Linda Harris, Senior Policy Analyst, Center for Law and Social Policy. (www.clasp.org). For a fuller discussion, see Harris, L. (January, 2006). *Learning from the Youth Opportunity experience: Building delivery capacity in distressed communities*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.

² The intellectual origins of the Youth Opportunity Grant movement are varied, but one influential source was the William T. Grant Foundation's 1998 report, *The forgotten half: Pathways to success for America's youth and young families*. (Washington, DC) (See Chapter Seven: "Fair Chance: Youth Opportunities Demonstration Act," p. 135ff.)

Recommendations: Building on Strength

Most of today's high school students enjoy many advantages by virtue of their birth into stable families that offer multiple opportunities for positive personal and social development, and educational backgrounds in which quality instruction is paramount, at least in the early grades. On the other hand, most of the youth served by the programs profiled in this report have not enjoyed the advantages enjoyed by students in America's best-performing high schools. Therefore, our criteria for judging program effectiveness include the value added not only in academic achievement but in personal and social development as well. The key questions we have sought to answer are:

- *Do the schools and community programs profiled here help youth and young adults see themselves as successful learners?*
- *Do they support the positive development of youth who have previously experienced school failure?*
- *Do they move out-of-school and disconnected youth into a position where they can better compete for good jobs with decent wages that can support a family?*
- *Do they offer learners the tools to cope with a rapidly changing economy and to take advantage of opportunities to continue their education beyond high school?*
- *Do they help their graduates avoid self-destructive and antisocial behaviors?*
- *Do graduates understand and exercise their responsibilities, not only as good workers and parents, but also as citizens in a democratic society?*

Fair-minded observers of local and national dropout recovery programs will conclude from this report that laudable work is occurring across the nation to reclaim out-of-school youth. Expertise and experience in this field have been accumulating for over 25 years (40 in the case of the Job Corps). Policymakers can be reasonably confident that, when

given society's mandate and adequate resources to reconnect out-of-school youth and help them become productive and responsible citizens, committed leadership can, in fact, do the job—and do it well.

In short, we believe that efforts of the type reviewed here merit the encouragement and support of the American people. If we are to be the kind of society envisioned in America's founding documents, a City on the Hill, we have much work to do, especially for and with the young people who are disconnected from America's mainstream.

As successful practitioners of dropout recovery consistently tell us, there is no large-scale formula or singular program model for recovering the literally millions of out-of-school youth who could profit from intelligent and sustained social policy for children and youth. However, there are actions we could take which would make a big difference to young people, their communities, the economy, and the nation's sense of social well-being.

Our recommendations build on the many strengths of the current dropout recovery field. They are not particularly expensive, though a number do require a larger public investment in youth. Implementing them would save American taxpayers many times the price we now pay for our national neglect of America's disconnected youth.

Recommendations

Policymakers at all levels of government should use both the bully pulpit and innovative legislation to achieve solid recognition that dropout recovery is an integral and essential dimension of school reform. As many of the sites profiled in *Whatever It Takes* demonstrate, public schools can mount effective and innovative measures if they embrace the notion that they have the moral responsibility to serve all of their community's young people and undereducated adults. Obviously, accepting this responsibility means that the public at large, as well as local and state governments, must be willing to underwrite the increased cost of educating all of our young people. We believe they will do so when they appreciate the beneficial results, including major economic gains, flowing from effective recovery programs. (We refer again to the data on pages vii-ix

for a reminder of the astounding costs to society of failing to embrace all our young people.)

School boards, superintendents, principals and other education leaders should take greater responsibility for all of their community's young people, including dropouts and other disconnected youth. The current models for standards-based high school reform assume that what works well for the one-third of students who are well-prepared for college will succeed for the two-thirds majority. This is patently not the case. School leaders would do well to learn from alternative educators about what works for students who are not on the college track when they enter 9th grade and then implement the changes necessary to reduce the number of young people dropping out of school. To meet the needs of diverse learners, both those in school and those who have left it, districts should work to create a portfolio of high school options embracing:

- multiple pathways to a recognized credential;
- programs offering open-entry and open-exit;
- compressed and expanded high school programs combined with dual enrollment in postsecondary institutions;
- programs to recover or make up missing academic credits;
- programs offering schedule flexibility, including evening and year-round schools;
- programs offering career-oriented curricula, with opportunities for students to engage in school-related internships and part-time employment; and
- adult high schools, especially the well-regarded daylight/twilight model, with opportunities for intergenerational learning.

In opening these options to their students, school districts should explore and deepen collaboration with existing youth-serving organizations in their communities, as many of the districts profiled in this report are doing with considerable success.

States should encourage the development of alternative education pathways. States can facilitate the development of alternative education pathways, which reduce the number of students dropping out of school, while providing well-lit reentry points for those who do leave school before obtaining a diploma. This can be done through legislation that, for example:

- provides uniform measures of dropouts and student tracking mechanisms,
- mandates that districts provide alternative educa-

tion options and engage in dropout recovery,

- allows districts the flexibility to award credit toward graduation based on demonstrated competency, not just “seat time,” and
- lays out a system for funds to follow students into alternative public education settings, including schools run by community-based organizations, community colleges, and charter schools.

Improving flexibility in funding programs that target struggling students and those who have already dropped out of school can be complicated. Such flexibility is crucial, however, to reducing barriers to stable funding for quality education options and alternative pathways to a high school diploma.

Build on the demonstrated success of long-established national dropout recovery programs.

Expand the National Guard Youth Challenge program, currently in 25 states, and Jobs for America's Graduates, currently in 29 states, to all 50 states and every territory. Similarly, at least double, over a five-year period, the capacity of YouthBuild, Youth Service and Conservation Corps, and OIC programs, particularly in those communities with the greatest incidence of youth dropping out of school. Expand the Job Corps, over a five- to ten-year period, from its current 122 centers to at least meeting the demand by states and localities for an additional 25 Job Corps centers.

The Federal Government should re-establish a dedicated federal funding stream for community-wide planning and services for out-of-school youth. This would be analogous to the former Youth Opportunities Grant Program, which did so much to encourage community collaboration on behalf of out-of-school youth. (See Chapter 19.) The YO Program resulted in tangible, long-term benefits for young people, but its ambitious concept needed more than three or four years to strike deep roots.

State and federal funds should be used to encourage community college involvement in reconnecting out-of-school youth. Community colleges hold great attraction and promise, particularly for older, out-of-school youth who seek ways to enter or reenter the worlds of education and employment. To encourage community colleges to participate in public school and CBO partnerships and intermediaries aimed at reconnecting out-of-school youth, state and federal funds should be made available to the colleges to extend their outreach and student counseling efforts.

Congress should expand funding for the federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. This will make it possible for youth who cannot participate in full-time dropout reconnection programs to partake of adult basic education and secondary school literacy programs in their local public schools, libraries, and community organizations. With the states' matching fund contributions, this is an admirable way to expand this well-functioning partnership which now serves over one million youth annually.

Funders should develop demonstration projects offering stipends or other financial incentives to increase student attendance, high performance, graduation, and continuing education so that students can devote their best efforts to learning and not be deflected by helping to meet their families' severe economic needs. Recognizing that most low-income, out-of-school youth desperately need at least modest income support or stipends to stay in and complete their respective programs, most alternative school and program leaders regard this as an extremely high priority.

Congress should enact and fund the Bush Administration's 2005 proposal amending the Workforce Investment Act to support nationally-competitive challenge grants for out-of-school youth programming. However, funding for this new approach should be in addition to, not at the expense of, WIA's current youth funding for both in-school and out-of-school education and employment training programs. The ability of local workforce investment boards to allocate their WIA youth funds as local priorities dictate should not be impaired by setting arbitrary national percentage allocations.

Funders should help create a learning network to promote opportunities for alternative education providers to advance their professional development. Dropout recovery programs are missing important opportunities because of their relative insularity. Leaders of these efforts generally operate in a trial-and-error mode, often reinventing the wheel because there is so little communication with others pursuing similar missions. Limited help from national program models is available, for example, from YouthBuild USA and the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps. Many programs clearly benefit from their association with the Washington-based National Youth Employment Coalition and its PEPNet Quality Improvement Awards

process. The Alternative High School Initiative, launched in 2003, also has the potential to support collaboration among alternative educators serving disconnected youth.

Overall, however, we deem it highly lamentable that there are so few vehicles for professional collaboration and learning and networks for expressing common concerns and sharing possible remedies. A learning network of and for alternative education providers is urgently needed to:

- support interchange among education providers, allowing them to leverage the expertise of strong existing recovery programs to improve their own effectiveness, and
- enable established dropout recovery efforts to provide technical assistance to those just beginning to address the issue in their communities.

Additionally, we recommend that funders develop an *Annual Dropout Recovery Leader's Award* to recognize quality and innovation and enable selected Leader programs to host and assist visitors from potential new initiatives elsewhere.

High school reform efforts at the local level should include the leaders of alternative education and those working to increase public knowledge of dropout prevention and recovery. Many of the schools and programs we profiled say that they are generally excluded from mainstream and official discussions of high school reform. Even principals of highly successful alternative schools within public school districts regret not being asked to sit at the high school reform table in their districts. Yet, these are the people and the places that have been successful with the youth least likely to succeed in traditional high schools. They have much to teach traditional high schools, not only about how to reengage disconnected youth, but also about what can be done to get it right the first time with students at risk of dropping out.



These tasks are urgent. The time is now. How much longer will America tolerate the scandal of a young person dropping out every nine seconds? If we do not act, what will the America of our children's generation look like? And how will we, ourselves, look back and reflect on how well we have discharged our responsibility to our fellow human beings in distress?

Additional Resources

Collaboration on dropout prevention and recovery is increasing among national organizations, membership associations, and philanthropic foundations, as well as some cities, school districts, and states. There is a budding awareness that reconnecting out-of-school youth is integral to the high school reform agenda and that agenda is one of the keys to the United States' prosperity, stability, and sense of national well-being. This is perhaps most evidenced by the fact that in 2005 all 50 state governors signed A Compact on State High School Graduation Data, agreeing to implement a standard, four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate; to lead efforts to improve state data collection, reporting and analysis and link data systems across the education pipeline; to take steps to implement additional indicators to provide richer information about outcomes; and to report annual progress on the improvement of their state high school graduation, completion, and dropout rate data.

The philanthropic community has shown growing interest in extending discussion of school reform to include recovery of out-of-school youth. The Youth Transition Funders Group (YTFG) is a network of grantmakers whose mission is to help vulnerable youth make a successful transition to adulthood by age 25 through encouragement of collaboration and strategic alliances. A YTFG working group focuses on Struggling Students and Out of School Youth in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Portland, OR and San Jose, helping them to move from piecemeal to systemic approaches to improving options and outcomes for struggling students and out-of-school youth. See <http://www.ytfg.org/> and our discussion of the YTFG's work in Philadelphia in Chapter 12.

In collaboration with YTFG, Jobs for the Future (JFF) is identifying critical pathways for struggling students and out-of-school youth so they may complete secondary education. JFF is developing district-wide strategies to ensure that vulnerable youth have a chance to graduate ready for college and careers. See *Early Lessons from the Strategic Assessment Initiative of the Youth Transitions Funders Group* (Jobs for the Future, 2005): <http://www.jff.org/jff/>

PDFDocuments/EarlyLessonsYTFG.pdf

The National League of Cities (NLC) Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF) is completing case studies of municipal leaders using cross-system collaboration as a key strategy to reengage disconnected youth in Albany, Boston, San Diego, Baltimore, Corpus Christi, Philadelphia, San Francisco, San Jose. NLC also sponsors the Municipal Network on Disconnected Youth as a peer learning ground for cities, and its YEF Institute provides technical assistance to cities. See its Action Kit, *Re-engaging Disconnected Youth*: http://www.nlc.org/iyef/publications_resources/2181.cfm.

The National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) has published profiles of alternative education schools and programs that have accessed state and local education funds. See *Financing Alternative Education Pathways: Profiles and Policy* (NYEC, 2005): <http://www.nyec.org/EdStrategies.html>. See also NYEC's *PEPNet Guide to Quality Standards for Youth Programs* (NYEC, 2005) and *From Data to Results: The PEPNet Guide to Measuring and Improving Performance in Youth Programs* (NYEC, 2005): <http://nyec.modernsignal.net/page.cfm?pageID=123>

The Center for Youth Development and Policy Research at the Academy for Educational Development is studying how community based organization schools integrate youth development principles into the process of educating young people in order to produce a richer educational environment and improved academic achievement. See their discussion, "Assessing with Standards vs. Standardizing Assessment" at www.tedweb.org.

On January 27, 2005, the Campaign for Youth, a "Coalition of Voices from the Field," sent President Bush a five-page set of recommendations addressed to the problems of "young people who have fallen outside of the education and labor market mainstreams." The text of these recommendations, endorsed by over 200 organizations, may be found at www.campaignforyouth.org.

Glossary

Average Daily Attendance (ADA)—The average number of students present during a given reporting period (usually a regular school session). ADA is calculated by dividing the total number of days in attendance for all students during a given reporting period by the total number of days the school is in session during a reporting period (National Center for Education Statistics).

Average Daily Membership (ADM)—The aggregate membership of a school during a reporting period (normally a school year) divided by the number of days school is in session during this period. The average daily membership for groups of schools having varying lengths of terms is the average of the average daily memberships obtained for the individual schools. (National Center for Education Statistics).

At-risk Youth—Young people who are unlikely to graduate on time with both the skills and self-esteem necessary to exercise meaningful options in the areas of work, leisure, culture, civic affairs, and interpersonal relationships (Bailey and Steglin, 2003).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)—An individual state's measure of progress toward the goal of 100% of students achieving state academic standards in at least reading/language arts and math. AYP must be met by schools receiving federal dollars under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Schools that have not achieved state-defined AYP for two consecutive school years must be identified as needing school improvement before the beginning of the next school year. Immediately after a school is found to be in need of improvement, school officials must receive help and technical assistance. These schools must develop a two-year plan to improve the school. Every student in the school must be given the option to transfer to another public school in the district (one that has not been identified as in need of improvement) with transportation, subject to a spending cap, provided by the school district. If the school does not achieve AYP for three consecutive years, the

school remains in school improvement status and the district must continue to offer public school choice to all students. In addition, students from low-income families must be offered supplemental educational services (e.g., free tutoring services or additional academic help for students provided outside of the regular school day). Parents may choose the services their child needs from a list of approved providers (US Department of Education, 2005).

Charter School—A publicly-funded school that, in accordance with an enabling state statute, has been granted a charter exempting it from selected state or local rules and regulations. A charter school may be newly created, or it may previously have been a public or private school. It is typically governed by a group or organization (e.g., a group of educators, a corporation, or a university) under a contract or charter with the state. In return for funding and autonomy, the charter school must meet accountability standards. A school's charter is typically reviewed every three to five years and can be revoked if guidelines on curriculum and management are not followed, or if the standards are not met (National Center for Education Statistics).

Disconnected Youth—Young people who are not connected to education, employment, or organizations that prepare them for successful adulthood (Aron, L.Y. & Zweig, J.M, 2003).

Dropout/Dropout Rate—The term “dropout” is used to describe both the event of leaving school before graduating and the status of an individual who is neither in school nor a graduate. There is no commonly accepted measure of a dropout. Measures designed to describe dropout patterns include the event dropout rate (or the closely related school persistence rate), the status dropout rate, and the high school completion rate (US Department of Education, 2005, p. 289).

Empowerment Zone (EZ)—A neighborhood determined by the federal government to be in need of

revitalization. On December 21, 1994, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development and the US Department of Agriculture designated 105 distressed communities as Empowerment Zones. In January 1999, the initiative was expanded through a second round of designations to include 20 new urban and rural Empowerment Zones and 20 new rural Enterprise Communities (US Department of Housing and Urban Development).

General Educational Development (GED)—A term used to describe both a comprehensive test used to appraise the educational development of students who have not completed their formal high school education and a high school equivalency certificate that may be awarded based on achievement of satisfactory scores on this test. The test is developed and distributed by the GED Testing Service of the American Council on Education and GEDs are awarded by states or other agencies (US Department of Education, 2005, p. 290-291).

High School Equivalency Certificate—A formal document certifying that an individual has met the state requirements for high school graduation equivalency by obtaining satisfactory scores on an approved examination and meeting other performance requirements, if any, set by state education agency or appropriate body. One particular version of the certificate is the GED (US Department of Education, 2005, p. 290-291).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)—The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the main federal law affecting education from kindergarten through high school. NCLB is built on four principles: accountability for results, more choices for parents, greater local control and flexibility, and an emphasis on doing what works based on scientific research (US Department of Education).

Open Enrollment—A policy allowing students to transfer in and out of a school at any time as long as there is space available (Eye on Education).

Open-Entry/Exit (OE/OE)—A self-paced educational alternative in which courses are designed for the disciplined or motivated student who can master

course material without traditional classroom instruction. OE/OE courses do not have traditional lectures or regularly scheduled classes, therefore students may begin and complete a course at any time and may progress at their own pace (Schoolcraft College).

The Promising and Effective Practices Network (PEPNet)—A system developed by the National Youth Employment Coalition to enhance the quality of programs that link young people (ages 12-25) to work and education, thereby promoting a successful transition to adulthood. The system includes quality standards for youth programming and tools to assist in assessment and program improvement (National Youth Employment Coalition).

The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS)—A two-year project of the US Department of Labor culminating in a 1992 report recommending changes to make school curricula and teaching methods more relevant to the modern workplace (Eye on Education).

Standards-based Assessment/Examination—Standards-based examinations are aligned with curriculum content or student performance requirements established by a state and/or local education agency at a particular grade (US Department of Education, 2005, p. 294).

The Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE)—TABE is a commercially-produced multiple-choice test published by McGraw-Hill/Contemporary with answer booklets, color-coded answer sheets, and supporting materials. It is a norm-referenced test designed to measure achievement of basic skills commonly found in adult basic education curricula and taught in instructional programs. Reading, language, mathematics, and spelling are the areas measured. The content used for the measurement stresses subject matter of high interest to adults—skills used in problem solving, decision making, and living itself (The McGraw-Hill Companies).

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)—Created by the Welfare Reform Law of 1996 TANF became effective July 1, 1997, and replaced

what was then commonly known as welfare: Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) programs. TANF provides assistance and work opportunities to needy families by granting states the federal funds and wide flexibility to develop and implement their own social welfare programs (The Alliance for Transportation Research Institute, The University of New Mexico).

Title I—A federally-funded assistance program for economically and educationally disadvantaged students. Title I refers to a section of Public Law 107-110 (and predecessor, P. L. 103-382), “Improving The Academic Achievement Of The Disadvantaged.” Students classified as Title I include those in schools offering targeted assistance to low-income children and schools with high rates of low-income children that use Title I funds to support certain school-wide programs (National Center for Education Statistics).

Youth Council—A legislatively-mandated committee of the local Workforce Investment Board (WIB). Youth Councils and WIBs are authorized under the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to oversee workforce development services and activities in each local area that receives federal funding under the Act. Each community’s Youth Council is designed to provide leadership and advocacy in support of its youth. It is responsible for overseeing youth funds and activities authorized by the Workforce Investment Act and for building a youth development system that aligns the area’s diverse youth-related funding streams in ways that reflect a community-wide consensus on effective youth practice and programming (Philadelphia Youth Network).

Workforce Investment Act (WIA)—Signed into law on August 7, 1998, WIA capped a seven-year effort to consolidate and streamline the nation’s employment and training programs. WIA replaced the Job Training Partnership Act (JPTA), enacted October 13, 1982. Under WIA, the federal government, states, and local communities jointly develop a system providing workers with job search assistance, training, and advice. All partners work together to provide employers with skilled workers (Nevada Workforce Informer).

Workforce Investment Board (WIB)—Volunteer bodies appointed by municipal leadership, WIBs work to promote the economic development strategies of local regions through governance of the public workforce system, which delivers a wide array of services to employers and job seekers. WIBs were established under the provisions of the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which called for the engagement of employers and other community stakeholder groups in the governance of the public workforce system. Workforce Investment Boards include representatives from the business community, organized labor, economic development, education, community-based organizations, and workforce program administrators. (Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board).

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About the Authors

Nancy Martin joined the American Youth Policy Forum in 2002. As Senior Program Associate, she develops AYPF forums, seminars, discussion groups, field trips, and publications to educate policy leaders on key youth issues, with a focus on out-of-school youth programming, career and technical education, and high school reform.

Previously, Ms. Martin worked with the Metropolitan Washington Council of the AFL-CIO, where she directed labor union involvement in the District of Columbia School-to-Careers Initiative, a federally-funded workforce development and education reform program. In this position, she provided leadership in District-wide planning and implementation of the initiative; built union partnerships with government, business, and school communities; and oversaw implementation of the program.

Ms. Martin is a trained social scientist with a background in high school and postsecondary teaching. She has extensive experience with workforce development as a teacher, curriculum developer, and program designer and has taught in the Department of Sociology at Brandeis University and the Boston Public Schools. She has served as a reviewer for the US Department of Education and the National Youth Employment Coalition and as a director of the Society for the Study of Social Problems.

Ms. Martin earned her BA from Oberlin College and her MA from Brandeis University.

Samuel Halperin has been a leader in academia, the federal government, a foundation, and nonprofit educational organizations since earning his doctorate in Political Science from Washington University, St. Louis in 1956.

Dr. Halperin was Co-founder and first President of the Institute for Educational Leadership (1969-1981) and Founder, now Senior Fellow, of the American Youth Policy Forum in Washington, DC.

In the early 1960s, he worked on US Senate and House of Representatives committees on education. As Director of the US Office of Education's Office of Congressional Relations and Assistant US Commissioner of Education for Legislation, he helped develop such landmark measures as the Elementary

and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the Higher Education Acts of 1963 and 1965, and others. In 1966, Dr. Halperin joined the Office of the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare where, as Deputy Assistant Secretary under Secretaries John W. Gardner and Wilbur J. Cohen, he participated in the development and passage of scores of Great Society measures in education and social services. For these efforts, he was twice awarded HEW's Superior Service Award, HEW's Distinguished Service Award, and the National Association of State Boards of Education Distinguished Service Award.

As study director of "Youth and America's Future: The William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship" (1986-1992) he was responsible for development of the Commission's major studies: *The Forgotten Half: Non-College Youth in America* and *The Forgotten Half: Pathways to Success for America's Youth and Young Families* (1988), and three dozen research reports and monographs on youth development, school-to-careers transition, and national and community service. In 1998, he edited *The Forgotten Half Revisited: American Youth and Young Families, 1988-2008*.

Dr. Halperin is the author or editor of a dozen books and numerous articles on the political process and education policy. He has taught at Wayne State, American, and Duke Universities and Teachers College-Columbia University. His service on boards and advisory bodies includes the Peace Corps, Secretary of the Navy's Advisory Board on Education and Training, National School Volunteer Program, Jobs for the Future, DC Private Industry Council, Center for Youth as Resources, Learning Matters on PBS, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, Associates for Renewal in Education, National School-to-Work Advisory Council, and Alliance for Excellent Education. Among his awards are the Distinguished Service Award of the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, the Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award of Jobs for the Future, the President's Medal of The George Washington University, the Harry S. Truman Award of the American Association of Community Colleges, and the Lewis Hine Award for Service to Children and Youth of the National Child Labor Committee.

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Following is a sampling of American Youth Policy Forum publications. Prepaid orders only, please. Prices include shipping and handling in the contiguous United States only. Send orders to: American Youth Policy Forum, 1836 Jefferson Place, NW, Washington DC 20036. Call (202) 775-9731 for rates on bulk orders. Also see our website for additional and online publications: www.aypf.org

Whatever It Takes: How Twelve Communities Are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth (2006)

Documents what committed educators, policymakers, and community leaders across the country are doing to reconnect out-of-school youth to the social and economic mainstream. Provides background on the serious high school dropout problem and describes in-depth how twelve communities are reconnecting dropouts to education and employment training. Includes descriptions of major national program models serving out-of-school youth. **online and in print, \$8**

The Link between High School Reform and College Success for Low-Income and Minority Youth (2005)

An in-depth review of school reform research presenting evidence of college preparation for all students; examines the predictors of college-going behavior and how they have been addressed by the high school reform movement. The report then describes promising practices from existing reform initiatives and makes recommendations. **online and in print, \$8**

Youth Court: A Community Solution for Embracing At-Risk Youth—A National Update (2005)

Builds upon research by the Urban Institute and an extensive survey of youth court programs by the National Youth Court Center. Provides up-to-date data to give policymakers and the public an overview of youth court programs, their characteristics, and benefits. Findings cover program completion, cost, returns on investment, impact on youth offenders and volunteers, educational and civic opportunities, program sustainability, and recommendations to policymakers. **online and in print, \$5**

Restoring the Balance Between Academics and Civic Engagement in Public Schools (2005)

Co-published with the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), questions the current focus on core academic subjects at the expense of an equally important role: preparing students to be engaged and effective citizens. The product of collaborative discussion among policymakers, education practitioners, community groups, parents, and youth, the report offers a seven-step action plan to help schools refocus on creating both academically proficient and civically engaged students. **online and in print, \$5**

Finance and Resource Issues in High School Reform (2003)

Summarizes discussions among education and youth development leaders regarding financial and resource issues in high school reform. These issues were identified as serious obstacles to meaningful reform in the 2000 American Youth Policy Forum report, *High Schools of the Millennium*. Addresses challenges in four distinct areas: 1) allocation and alignment of resources to support standards-based reform and higher expectations for all students, 2) generating resources for the interventions and specialized programs necessary to support the learning of students with special needs, 3) allocating resources to support learning in alternative education settings, and 4) developing funding strategies for dual enrollment programs. **online and in print, \$5**

Essentials of High School Reform (2003)

Speaks to a concern that much attention is being paid to greater academic achievement in core subjects, resulting in little focus on other outcomes that youth need to be successful: communication, teamwork, analytical and interpersonal skills. Contends that students also need to learn about potential careers, have a familiarity with the world of work beyond the classroom walls, and develop occupational competencies. Summarizes roundtables that offered policy recommendations and practical advice on how to structure contextual teaching and learning and alternative assessments. **online and in print, \$8**

Preparing Youth for Employment: Principles and Characteristics of Five Leading United States Youth Development Programs (2003)

Designed for practitioners in both the public and nongovernmental sectors who implement youth employment programs, the policymakers who support them, and youth leaders who wish to learn more about the principles and characteristics of leading youth employment programs in the United States. Identifies components which may be applicable to the settings of other nations. *online and in print, \$2*

No More Islands: Family Involvement in 27 School and Youth Programs (2003)

When families are active in their children's learning at home, in school, and in youth programs, this connection yields higher grades and test scores, better attendance, attention to homework, fewer special education placements, better attitudes and behavior, higher graduation rates, and greater enrollment in postsecondary education. Family involvement is a requirement of both the No Child Left Behind and the Workforce Investment Acts. The report asserts that young people should not be treated as "islands" by school and youth programs, separate from the context of learning involving their families. *online and in print, \$8*

A Guide for the Powerless; A Political Process Primer (2000)

Acquire essential political skills and attitudes to engage productively with both elected and appointed officials at all levels of government. This easy-to-read guide is a perfect introduction to effective citizenship for community leaders, educators, students, youth workers and other human service providers. (Over 90,000 in print with numerous reprints.) *print only, \$3*

Building an Effective Citizenry: Lessons Learned From Initiatives in Youth Engagement (2003)

In 2002-2003, AYPF conducted a series of forums and field trips focused on the development of effective citizenry and youth engagement. Participants learned about the wide variety of work helping young people take action in their schools and communities and to become engaged and effective citizens. Researchers presented findings about youth civic engagement, and leaders of youth organizations discussed their efforts to engage young people in education reform, service-learning, and community activism. *online and in print, \$5*

Shaping the Future of American Youth: Youth Policy in the 21st Century (2003)

AYPF celebrated its tenth anniversary in January 2003 by inviting 14 of America's leading experts on youth affairs—analysts, activists, advocates, institution-builders—to write the essays and commentaries in this volume. These leaders accepted the challenge to step back from the press of their fully-committed working days and reconsider the development of their particular field of youth affairs over the past decade, take a leap into the future, and sketch their personal hopes and visions for a positive and creative future for American youth. *online and in print, \$8*

Finding Common Ground: Service-Learning and Education Reform (2002)

Highlights areas of compatibility between Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) programs and elements of service-learning. Most CSR programs (or models) provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real-life situations, address local community issues and interests, and develop civic skills and competencies. It remains to be seen whether these two educational movements collaborate to develop a unified approach to linking classroom academics to service in school and the community, providing a truly comprehensive education for America's children and youth. *online and in print, \$8*

Lessons Learned: What the WAY Program Can Teach Us About Program Replication (2002)

Addresses the issue of program replication based on the experience of replicating the Work Appreciation for Youth (WAY) program in four urban community-based organizations with support from the US Department of Labor/Employment and Training Division. WAY was originally developed by The Children's Village (CV) for youth in the child welfare system's most restrictive level of care—residential treatment—to assist and motivate them to stay in school and to develop and practice work ethics after they were discharged from care. *online and in print, \$3*

Twenty-Five Years of Educating Children with Disabilities: The Good News and the Work Ahead (2001)

Highlights the progress made during the past quarter-century in educating children with disabilities. Includes data showing how much more needs to be done to prepare all students with disabilities for a productive and independent future. Brings this infor-

mation in digestible form to policymakers, parents, classroom teachers and reporters. **online and in print, \$4**

Higher Learning = Higher Earnings (2001)

A booklet for students in middle and high school offering guidance in making decisions that will affect the rest of their lives. This colorful guide is filled with images showing how “More education equals more money.” It speaks to those who do not know if they should pursue a 2-year or 4-year degree, or train for a special occupational license. A valuable youth empowerment tool that should be shared with students as they prepare to take control over their future. **online and in print, \$2**

Technology as an Equalizer in Education, Transition to Careers in Daily Life (2001)

A summary of AYPF events exploring the movement toward using technology to assist youth with disabilities. Describes innovative partnerships between employers and the education and training sectors that use technology to help youth with disabilities make effective transitions in school, work, and daily life. **online and in print, \$2**

Less Cost, More Safety: Guiding Lights for Reform in Juvenile Justice (2000)

Following up on the June 2000 report, *Less Hype, More Help: Guiding Lights for Reform in Juvenile Justice*, this study profiles eight juvenile justice initiatives nationwide that are making communities safer and also saving taxpayers money. The success of these guiding light programs demonstrates the need for fundamental reforms in our nation’s efforts to combat juvenile crime. **online and in print, \$5**

Less Hype, More Help: Reducing Juvenile Crime, What Works—and What Doesn’t (1999)

Demonstrating that trying youthful offenders in adult courts—“adult time for adult crime”—is a counterproductive fad that actually exacerbates juvenile crime, this groundbreaking report describes alternative approaches that are more effective in preventing teens from committing crimes, and in protecting the communities in which they live. **online and in print, \$5**

Thinking About Tests and Testing: A Short Primer in “Assessment Literacy” (1999)

Are you confused about all the technical talk about

tests and testing? Know the difference between norm-referenced tests and criterion-referenced tests? An objective discussion to help understand the arguments now raging around education about “high-stakes tests” and their consequences. If you have trouble understanding statistics, this book is for you—it’s simple, straightforward, and very useful. **online and in print, \$5**

The Good News About American Education (1999)

Compiles education research, currently overrun with discouraging statistics and stories, to find facts that record improvements in several education areas. Do you know that fewer students are dropping out of school, school crime is declining, more girls are taking high-level mathematics and science courses, and more students with disabilities are being educated in regular classrooms? **online and in print, \$2**

Some Things That DO Make a Difference for Youth: A Compendium of Evaluations of Youth Programs and Practices (1998)

Summarizes 69 evaluations of youth interventions in education, employment and training, mentoring, service-learning, and youth development to craft strategies affecting services and support for our nation’s youth, particularly disadvantaged young people. **online and in print, \$10**

MORE Things That DO Make a Difference for Youth, Vol. II (1999)

A Compendium of 64 more evaluations of youth programs, including career academies, school-to-work, Tech Prep, school reform, juvenile justice, and related areas of youth policy. **online and in print, \$10**

SPECIAL!! Double Volume Set of Both Compendia: MORE Things That DO Make a Difference (Vol. 2) AND Some Things DO Make a Difference for Youth (Vol. I) (1998/1999) \$15.00, print only

Employers Talk About Building a School-to-Work System: Voices From the Field (1998)

Representatives of 13 employers and seven intermediary organizations offer perspectives about lessons learned from their school-to-work experiences. Provides insight into employer motivation, activities, and support for participation in STW across the country. **print only, \$4**

What Business Organizations Say About School-to-Work: An Analysis and Compendium of Organizational Materials (1998)

Analyzes materials from seven business organizations active in a variety of school-to-work systems: American Society for Training and Development, Business Coalition for Education Reform, The Business Roundtable, Committee for Economic Development, National Alliance of Business, National Association of Manufacturers and US Chamber of Commerce.

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Exploring Systems for Comprehensive Youth Employment Preparation in Switzerland, Austria and Germany: Impressions from a Study Mission (1998)

Observations of a group of Congressional policy aides and senior civil servants in the field of education and training for employment as they examined at first hand systems of youth employment preparation in three countries. *print only, \$5*

A Young Person's Guide to Managing Money (1998)

An easy-to-read reference for pressing issues of money management, including savings and checking accounts, credit cards and borrowing, health insurance, budgeting, paying bills, paying taxes and living independently. Provides valuable contact information for youth trying to make the most of their hard-earned money. *print only, \$2*

Youth Work, Youth Development, and the Transition from Schooling to Employment in England: Impressions from a Study Mission (1996)

Observations of an 18-Member US delegation of federal and state policy aides, researchers, program practitioners, and representatives of nonprofit youth-serving national organizations about policies and practices in England to reform the education system, support youth work and the delivery of services, and prepare young people for the workplace. *print only, \$2*

Preparing Youth for the Information Age: A Federal Role for the 21st Century (1996)

Argues for high expectations for all students, offers a compelling vision of a high school "redesigned for success" and outlines strategies to support youth in their learning. Offers insights into developing state and local consensus on results, improving accountability at the state and local level, and improving school quality. *print only, \$2*

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Prevention or Pork? A Hard-Headed Look at Youth-Oriented Anti-Crime Programs (1995)

Surveys what is known about the effectiveness of youth crime prevention programs. What works and what does not? *online and in print, \$2*

The American School-to-Career Movement: A Background Paper for Policymakers (1994)

Interviews and analysis of current efforts to link schooling and the world of employment with essential tasks to be addressed by each of the social partners in the community. *print only, \$2*

Dollars and Sense: Diverse Perspectives on Block Grants and the Personal Responsibility Act (1995)

Eleven authors offer a wide spectrum of opinion on improving our country's efforts to promote needed support for America's children and families, particularly as affected by proposed welfare reforms. *print only, \$2*

Improving the Transition from School to Work in the United States (1993)

A detailed, clear analysis of the transition of American youth from school to employment. Offers strategies for improving career preparation and makes recommendations for federal policy. *print only, \$2*

Helping Youth Succeed Through Out-of-School-Time Programs (2006)

Reviews current research literature on out-of-school time (OST) programs, especially with regard to their effectiveness; explores the range of OST activities as employed by various youth-serving sectors; considers the untapped possibilities of OST programs to meet the needs of young people, including academic enhancement, career and college preparation, leadership development, and civic engagement; and provides policy guidance on how to sustain high quality OST programs as part of a system of supports for older youth. *online only*

Enhancing High School Reform: Lessons from Site Visits to Four Cities (2005)

Summarizes successful practices and policies of a number of innovative high schools visited by national policymakers on recent site visits. AYPF introduced these policymakers to the reform-minded leaders of transformed high schools to help them understand the challenges and possibilities of high school redesign. **online only**

Transforming the American High School: Lessons Learned and Struggles Ahead (2004)

From October 2000-April 2004, AYPF provided learning experiences for policymakers considering strategies to create more effective learning environments for youth, particularly disadvantaged youth, that lead to increased academic achievement and better preparation for further learning and careers. AYPF conducted organized speaker forums, field trips, discussion groups, and roundtables and produced publications for policymakers and practitioners. The report summarizes what was learned from these educational events. **online only**

No Child Left Behind: Improving Educational Outcomes for Students with Disabilities (2004)

Explores how expectations for students with disabilities are changing as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act. Overall, there is strong support for increasing expectations for students with disabilities and helping improve their academic outcomes. At the same time, there is concern about how states and schools will manage this process, largely as a function of lack of knowledge of effective interventions and strategies. Written by the American Youth Policy Forum and Educational Policy Institute and commissioned by National Council on Disability to assist policy leaders and stakeholders in identifying, disseminating, and aligning evidence-based practices with the Federal Government's commitment to leave no child behind in the attainment of a free, appropriate, and high-quality public education. **online only**

Does Religious Participation Help Keep Adolescents in School? (2004)

Explores the potential benefit to youth of associating with a religious organization and summarizes existing research on the importance of organizational involvement, both religious and "secular," in promoting the educational success of youth. Findings

indicate that most forms of religious participation do contribute to on-time graduation from high school and total years of educational attainment. These conclusions persist when the sample is limited to poor or minority youth. Recommendations identify strategies public officials can pursue to reduce obstacles to religious participation among youth, as well as encourage religious institutions to take a more active role in teen success, all while respecting principles of separation of church and state. **online only**

In Service to Our Nation: A Guide to the Members of the National & Community Service Coalition (2004)

Introduces the reader to NCSC member organizations, highlighting the good works they have accomplished in service to our nation. Members represented here state their positions on the reauthorization of the National and Community Service Act. **online only**

Lessons Learned About Effective Policies and Practices for Out-of-School-Time Programming (2003)

Compiled from site visits by policymakers, discusses the challenges to out-of-school-time program implementation, including issues of going to scale, state and local roles and responsibilities, funding and sustainability, the role of intermediaries and advocates, and the relationship between OST programming and academic achievement. Offers tips on how communities can provide OST activities that are both effective and responsive to local needs. Illustrates numerous uses and public policy solutions to which OST programming has been applied, including leverage for school reform initiatives, opportunities for teacher professional development, expanded resources for schools and communities, sites for school-based services, reinforcement of mutual school and community interests, and outlets for individual/group expression, extended youth development, community culture, and community education. **online only**

Summary of the WIA Learning Exchange for Youth Systems (2003)

In April 2002, a General Accounting Office (GAO) report to Congress outlined challenges faced by state and local Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth program implementers. To address these challenges a series of Peer Learning Exchanges focused on three

areas of youth programming that needed improvement: 1) recruitment and retention of out-of-school youth; 2) strengthening the connection among WIA partners, particularly between the education and the workforce communities; and 3) documenting competencies and gains through appropriate assessments and credentials. Second, the Exchanges identified and promoted promising practices in local and state workforce investment areas about successful implementation of youth-related WIA provisions. Finally, the Exchanges aimed to develop a model for the delivery of system-wide technical assistance by incorporating visits to exemplary WIA sites, communicating practical experiences, and fostering learning networks. Summarizes key findings from the Learning Exchanges. **online only**

Finding Fortune in Thirteen Out-of-School-Time Programs (2003)

A compendium of evaluation summaries makes the case that participation in OST programs improves outcomes for youth in academic achievement improvement and higher developmental outcomes; contributes to the evidence needed to make reasoned decisions regarding the future of after school and out-of-school-time OST programming. **online only**

Rigor and Relevance: A New Vision for Career and Technical Education (2003)

What should the role of the federal government be in Career and Technical Education (CTE)? AYPF organized a series of discussion groups with a diverse range of individuals to focus on this question. The paper provides a vision of reformed CTE, with career pathways, links to business, stronger connections from high school to postsecondary education, and more challenging academics. **online only**

Proceedings of 2001 Policy Forum: Education Reform Through Standards: What Does It Mean for Youth in Alternative Education Settings? (2002)

In 2001, the National Youth Employment Coalition organized a colloquium with AYPF to discuss issues surrounding reform through standards: education systems and employers raising expectations and standards and thereby creating a need for a parallel system of comprehensive supports, effective teaching practices, and higher expectations for literacy skills. The forum also examined the need for alternative

education programs to link their curricula to state standards. **online only**

Raising Minority Academic Achievement (2001)

The culmination of a detailed, two-year effort to find, summarize, and analyze evaluations of school and youth programs that show gains for minority youth across a broad range of academic achievement indicators. The report provides an accessible resource for policymakers and practitioners interested in promoting the academic success of racial and ethnic minorities from early childhood through postsecondary study. **online only**

High Schools of the Millennium: Report of the Workgroup (2000)

High schools are out of date and need to be redesigned to meet the needs of today's youth. The report argues for a new vision of high school, one that uses all the resources of the community to create smaller learning environments, to engage youth in their striving for high academic achievement, to support them with adult mentors and role models, and to provide them with opportunities to develop their civic, social, and career skills. **online only**

Raising Academic Achievement: A Study of 20 Successful Programs (2000)

Twenty youth programs that are profiled in this report succeeded in raising test scores, retention rates, graduation rates, and other measures of academic performance. The report analyzes the strategies used and summarizes the program contents. **online only**

Looking Forward: School-to-Work Principles and Strategies for Sustainability (2000)

Organized around Ten Essential Principles to assist policymakers, practitioners, and the wider community in thinking about ways to sustain successful school-to-work approaches, the Principles represent a distillation of critical elements of the School to Work Opportunities Act: improving the school experience for young people, expanding and improving work-based learning opportunities, and building and sustaining public/private partnerships. Also identifies federal legislation and national programs that support these gains, as well as actions for leadership at the local, state, national, and federal levels.

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